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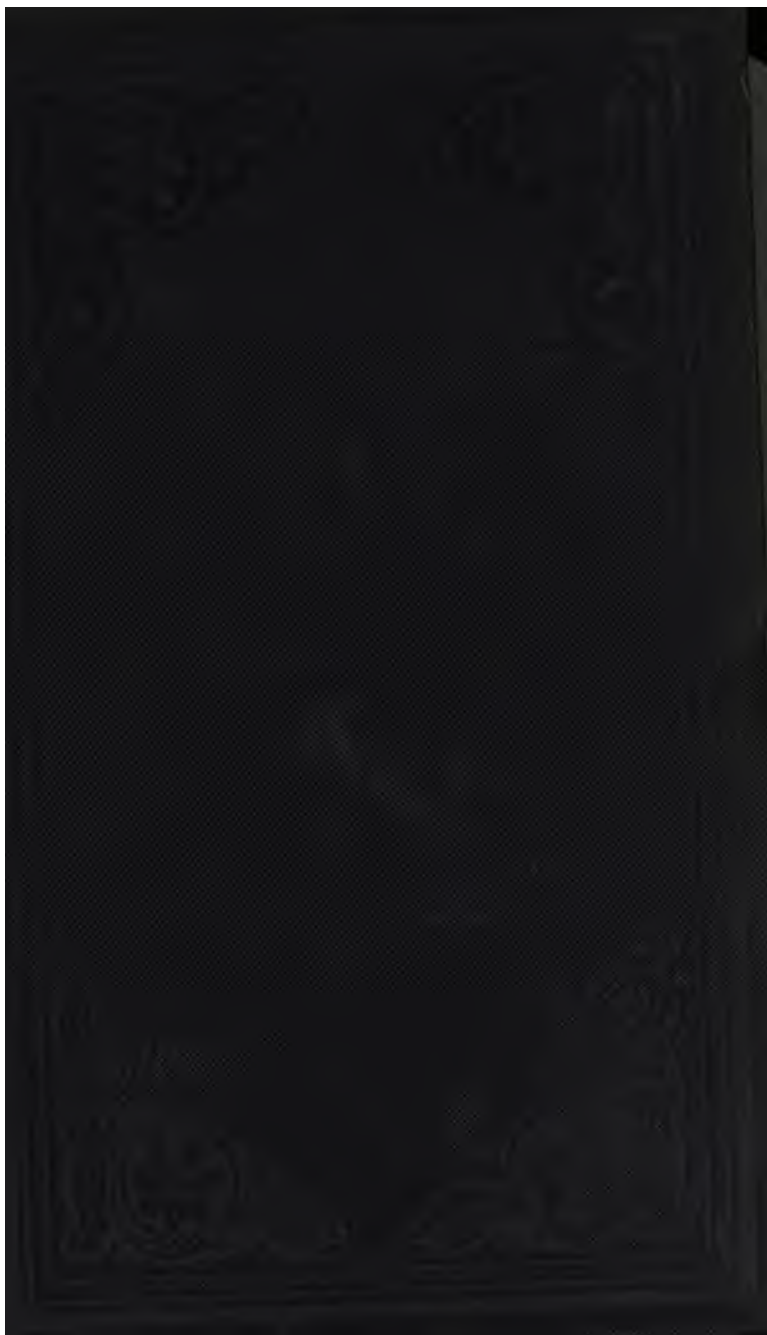
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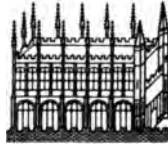
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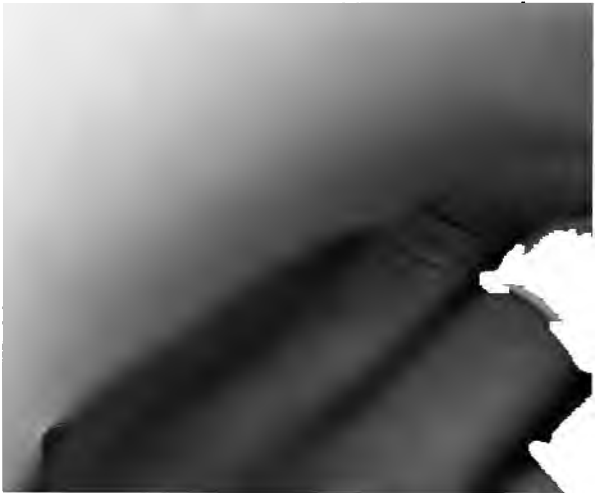
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CAN
W O M A N
R E G E N E R A T E
SOCIETY?



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CAN WOMAN REGENERATE SOCIETY?

INTRODUCTION.

Woman, thou art born to weep,
Till fades the rose-hue from thy cheek;
From thy cradle to thy tomb,
Thou art curtained round by gloom.

THE public mind, we are told, is at length alive to the claims which woman has at various periods, but especially of late, asserted; claims so many and so varied, that it is thought they must obtain at least a hearing. As yet, however, that hearing can scarcely be impartial, characterized as these claims are by many, as a mere chimera of the age. Civilization has yet to advance; a knowledge of the true and therefore essential interests of humanity has yet to be acquired; religion must be better understood, its influence more fully felt; and, lastly, woman must *improve herself*, before her demands will be attended to. Meanwhile the glimmering of the dawn is beheld; the herald is descried who proclaims the brightness of the advancing day, when woman

shall be raised to resume that place in creation for which she was intended.

The object of this short work is, to impress upon her the importance of the position which she should endeavour to attain, and which, in spite of all existing disadvantages, she may attain—if she will. It is not addressed in particular to the younger part of the sex, but rather to those who have experienced some of the realities of life, its difficulties and perplexities; to those who have felt how different is actual existence to the fairy dream of youthful and glowing imagination.

In the hope of exciting some to make the attempt at least to ameliorate, if not completely to reform, the condition in which woman now exists, a fraction is added to what has been already written, and in several instances admirably written, upon this subject. It must, however, be observed that in more than one instance, principles and sentiments have been advocated, the consequences of which would not only keep woman in the debased state in which she now is; but, if the assertion were followed out which is maintained, that her whole strength lies in *feeling*, she would thereby be led into the very paths, where it is certain, her best feelings would be lacerated, and where, through these feelings, she

would be made the tool and the victim of the selfish, the artful and the unprincipled. To call attention to such errors, and their pernicious results, is one of the objects in the following pages.

It is asserted by some individuals that man cannot be the *real* friend of woman; an assertion certainly very degrading to both sexes, were it true: though perhaps it has been intended to allege no more, than that the fact is apparent only in the present state of social intercourse,—a state which, however, may surely be so amended as to permit of man and woman becoming friends and companions, in the most refined and best sense of the words.

Woman has been and is even yet too often told that in herself she can be nothing; that she is in fact a mere relative being, dependant entirely upon man for her happiness. Such statements forcibly recall to our minds the theories of those who conceive that woman is merely a half soul, who until she finds her other half, (which she must do, however, before *either* can be perfect,) cannot be happy, or even at rest! In a new system of French philosophy, just given forth to the world, and which has excited much sensation, if not conviction, this idea figures conspicuously. One of our Oxford scholars, too, has imbibed somewhat

of the same notion, upon which he expatiates very poetically, both in regard to this world, and that which is to come. Woman, however, is certainly indebted to the latter author, for his endeavours to represent her, as more of the angel than the mortal!

Let me not be misunderstood when I say that woman must be taught to look for her happiness apart from man, as if that happiness were to be found in self-love. As human beings, we must all seek for happiness from sources beyond ourselves, though I must assert as an important principle, that woman should be as little instructed that her happiness is dependant upon, or that it must spring from, man alone, as that man should be taught to believe that his greatest enjoyment depended solely upon woman. Our affections ought to be extended and diffused in universal love to all, not cramped into a circle of which the other sex forms the centre, the circumference, the diameter, the whole! The most fearful consequences have arisen from this absurd worship, and this creature homage has again and again led to the most confused wretchedness.

It is a lamentable error artificially to excite and foster those feelings which invariably tend to weaken and enervate the mind, which are so often the cause of misleading the affections, and placing

them upon unworthy objects ; thereby rendering the whole character either insipid, or altogether destroying it; leaving in its stead a mere chaos of feelings, which, finding no legitimate object for exercise, are liable to be expended upon whatever presents itself before them, or to turn inwards and devour their possessor. It is no wonder that women attach undue importance to trifles, and waste their feelings upon non-entities, wrought up as these feelings so often are to a state of disease, alike painful to the possessor and wearisome to others.

Woman ought to prove herself, and examine whether she be indeed the mere being of impulse and instinct she is so frequently proclaimed to be. Should she find, however, that she possesses reason as well as instinct, in common with her presumed superior, let her exercise it, till she forms what is called judgment; since undeveloped or slumbering reason is scarce in fact so useful as instinct, puzzling the learned psychologists who comment upon it to decide, wherein lies the difference, or how to assign to each its proper limit.

So profound is the ignorance of the generality of women in regard to their actual endowments, that we are almost led to believe they hold the same opinion of their sex, as did a foreign writer of the sixteenth century, namely, "That woman

was not of the same species as man!" to prove and maintain the truth of which assertion, he favoured the world with a treatise upon the subject, of a very extraordinary kind, perverting even the text of Scripture to suit his views. It is to be feared that too many still exist whose ideas are not much more elevated, or consistent with truth, than were those of the Italian writer to whom I have just referred, though, in this enlightened age, few may be found willing openly to express such opinions, or none, perhaps, sufficiently venturesome to torture Scripture for a similar purpose. It is written, that woman is the co-equal of man, formed for the same high destiny, inspired by the same sublime hopes, and breathing the same lofty aspirations.

It appears frivolous to speak of bodily strength being a plea upon which to found a title to superiority; as in that case a man of huge muscle might be called the superior of a philosopher, should the frame of the latter be diminutive. The barbaric times are past when bodily strength was the touchstone by which most things were tested; when, if a female was accused of crime, her innocence had to be proved by combat, and when woe waited on the dame whose champion's strength was small, or whose skill in arms was defective. But though this peculiar species of

barbarism has disappeared, in many instances we may still ask whether our own so-called light be indeed preferable to the darkness of the middle ages? The innocent are yet made to suffer for the guilty, the strong oppress the weak; though witches are no longer burnt, prejudices as foolish and inveterate as were the superstitious opinions of former days, still reign amongst us. Modern times have their martyrs and victims, though the Inquisition exists no longer, and we hear no more of an *auto da fé*.

But it is certain that until woman herself is aware of her true position, all plans for her welfare must prove abortive, and only end in the disappointment of those who are desirous of her elevation. So long as she is content to be a mere figure of speech, a something to be admired if beautiful, to be shunned if plain, to be avoided if talented, to be voted a bore if learned, and to be altogether forgotten when aged; so long as she helps forward, or, even connives at such a system, so long will her case be hopeless, and the remedies for her improvement utterly unavailing. We may ask, moreover, of what can those women be made, who calmly look on and behold the demoralization which not only exists, but advances with fearful strides (if even facts of a different nature should make no impression upon them), who can witness

hundreds, nay thousands rushing towards destruction, and yet not feel a wish to stretch out their hands to save such victims from the snares, which are everywhere so plentifully spread around them? The apathy of the sex in this instance, as well as their indifference to all but the most trifling occupations, would indeed be puzzling to their advocates, were it not that we are aware of the effects of evil training, combined with the results of a state of thralldom. Noble exceptions, however, exist, of which we may indeed be proud, when we consider the eminence of their position, and the obstacles they must have met and surmounted before they could attain it.

We are told that without freedom the mind never can attain its highest elevation; how then can the mind of woman expand, fettered and chained as it is? how can *she* progress, when laughed at if she moralizes, ridiculed if she dares to tamper with philosophy, and told from time to time to keep within her sphere?—a sphere circumscribed to the narrowest limits by conventional usages, a prison within which she is doomed to dwell, and wherein, like the generality of prisoners, she must become a heartless, listless, apathetic being, hoping for nothing; or, if the contrary, enduring much, and fearing more. Those who have known this petrification of the

mind, this all but annihilation of the soul, where no object was allowed upon which the powers of that soul might have been healthily and actively employed, will perfectly understand what I mean. There are invisible fetters more galling than iron ones possibly can be, and which bow down the spirit, even more cruelly and certainly than the others can oppress the body.

It is to those who have tried and proved what life really is; to those who are calm, who have striven against much and overcome, that I venture to make myself understood;—to those who have arrived at that point in their earthly journey, when the flush of expectation has faded to a sober hue, when things are seen as they are, and not as they are wished to be;—to those whose convictions are deep and powerful, whose minds are strengthened by exercise, and whose feelings are alive to the happiness or misery of their race. And the principal reason why the more advanced in years are addressed, rather than those whose minds are yet to be formed, is, because it is believed, that to dictate, and give what is called advice to the young, is in many cases, especially upon certain subjects, nearly, if not altogether, useless. The experience of age can assist youth only in a very limited degree, and it would be unnatural were it otherwise; for there is some-

thing within us, which impels each to make the trial of life for himself, and the more vigorous the mind, the more anxious it is to acquire knowledge by individual experience.

But such as are themselves convinced of any great truth, and are desirous that it should be known by others, ought to afford to younger minds such information as must make them unfailingly perceive it in due time. Many persons, appear to me, injudiciously to begin instruction at the wrong end; we should try to fix certain grand and fundamental principles in the mind, point out high and lofty aims, worthy of noble efforts, and then leave those minds to act healthily and freely. This method would be worth many dry maxims and volumes of advice, whereby the younger are often perplexed, indeed overwhelmed, and by means of which they are often rendered artificial and unnatural, as well as denied the benefit of thinking for themselves. Individuals may be observed who have been brought up under this 'wholesome training,' as many good people call it, (but which with more propriety might be called unwholesome,) so dependant upon the opinion and judgment of those around them that it is painful to hear them speak, or to see them act, since they do not seem to have an idea which with truth they can call their own. There surely

cannot be a more deplorable picture than a human being, morally, mentally and physically dependant upon others.

When the progress of woman is discussed, an idea commonly presents itself to the minds of superficial thinkers, that such a design is full of mischief, if not of positive danger. They conceive that some scheme is involved in it, whereby to convert woman into the rival of man, to pervert her character, and to place her in a position at variance with that assigned to her by the law of nature.

With regard to these ideas it may be observed that as to rivalry between the sexes, those persons are dreamers who imagine this at present to be possible, even were the thought harboured. Male opinion of itself must be in a sad state of depression (to use a phrenological phrase) before such an idea could be entertained, and as woman progresses at a very snail-like pace, some generations must pass away before any one need be disquieted about the matter. Again, with regard to that natural law about which so much is said, "the inferiority of woman," may the case not stand thus,—that in consequence of an unnatural law having been substituted by man for the original and divine law, woman has been made what she now is, not exactly what nature intended her to

be? man in the meanwhile having unwittingly reaped the bitter fruits of such an infringement of the harmony ordained by God. It is a desire to re-establish this harmony, broken through at one time by the passions, and at another by the ignorance of man, which impels all who have ever taken a sincere interest in the well-being of woman to advocate her cause. To assist in this, however, it is absolutely requisite that woman herself should narrowly examine into what is passing around her, as well as into what is passing within herself; it is to *her* I speak and not to man, being unwillingly convinced that she does not avail herself as she might, even of the few advantages at present within her reach. No woman ought to take for granted, or believe as a truth, that, whose foundation she has not previously and earnestly examined, no matter if for whole centuries the supposed fact has remained an undisputed one. It would fare better with her in the long run, were she to take this trouble before she assents to much that she is constantly hearing: few women seem to care about proving things, and in this they neglect the advice of the Apostle of the Gentiles, since they hold fast many opinions into whose soundness they have never inquired.

Placed in her just position, woman should assuredly be the friend and companion of man, in

the true sense of the words; but what is she now? Treated at one moment as a child, at another as a plaything, if fair as an angel — for a while! Then wearied of as the child, thrown away as the toy, and beauty vanished, stript of her angelic splendour, and forced to tread the miry paths of life in the way she best can. Such is woman now; trained from childhood to believe, that for man, and for man alone, she must live, that marriage must be not only her highest but her only aim on earth, as in it is comprised the whole of her destiny. Forced to repress many lofty thoughts, knowing that these would only add to the burthen she already feels, that woman must be strong-minded indeed who can burst through the prejudices of education, and trample under foot the traditions of custom, in order to excavate the buried and nearly obliterated command of the Divine lawgiver, who gave to no human being the right to domineer over another.

In so limited a work as this, the peculiar characteristics of woman cannot be entered upon, or her peculiar grievances stated; to examine such details would involve the writer in the discussion of weightier matters than are yet necessary. Besides, wrangling being a hateful occupation, that wisdom ought to be preferred which is peaceful; though it is certain that before we can have peace,

we are often compelled to make war; but I leave this dangerous, though perhaps needful task, to those who are better fitted for it than I am.

There is one fact connected with this question of which honourable mention should be made. In every age it has been the most enlightened and best of men, who have pleaded the propriety and justice of bringing up women in a superior and more perfect manner than has hitherto been the case. And it has ever been such men, who have most enjoyed the society of intelligent and well-informed women; while the others, conscious as it were of their treatment of the sex, shrink from the presence of such women, and are never so ill at ease as in their company, reminding us when there of the accused standing before the face of their accusers.

The most common objection to the higher education of woman is, that if better instructed she would neglect minor duties; but we may ask in opposition to this, what necessary affinity exists between knowledge and indifference to the ordinary comforts of life? The objection is weak, childishly so, for it stands to reason that the better informed a woman may be, the more distinctly will she see her duties, and perform them the better, in a different manner surely, to that of the listless being who does just as she is bid,

and no more. By education, I do not mean learning, for learning is one thing, and wisdom another; there is no necessity for men or women either, being walking encyclopædias; but there is much need for their becoming, if possible, efficient members of society. All ought to be taught, that it is their duty to reflect, and judge; so that, they may not walk blindly at the heels of others, but be able to assign a reason for their actions.

The heads of the one sex have been educated, or filled at least, at the expense of their hearts, while the case has just been reversed in regard to the other; the feelings of woman having been forced, as in a hot-house, at the expense of her understanding. Were the system somewhat reversed in regard to both, how beneficial would be the consequences; were virtue to be regarded as an indivisible whole, not frittered into shreds and patches, with male and female names tacked to them, how much better would it be for both parties. It is an absurdity to bestow the names of different virtues upon what are only different modes of action, owing to which, we hear of actions being excellent in man, which are intolerable in woman! This assignation of a gender to virtue, in its singular or plural sense; this separation of what is an essential unity; is one of the deepest rooted errors of education, as it is

called. Learning in itself can neither be considered as masculine or feminine, and yet, when it becomes the object of a woman's ambition, it must undergo a change, and be adapted to her *femininity*, or she is censured as unwomanly, for the reception of such an unforbidden guest. The now venerable Sydney Smith, when, some years since, advocating a better education for woman, remarked, "That learning would not necessarily make a woman uncaring of her children," and most certainly he is in the right.

This vulgar idea, however, is dominant in the minds of many, even of those who ought to know better, but, as a contrast to their darkness, I may refer to the opinions of one of the most celebrated of deceased Scots philosophers, as to the intellectual powers of those whom, though in different modes yet in all ages, man has not ceased to ridicule. However, I cannot help thinking that such witty and sarcastic authors as have taken the most pains to abuse us, have felt only too keenly that we were treading more closely on their footsteps than they wished, and could conceive no higher aim in their attacks than by this satire to keep us at bay.

One of our principal Reviews says, "That the highest refinement is to be found in the society of cultivated women, and that this is the last

acquirement of nations." This may be so, but how long must we wait for nations arriving at such a height? In the midst of the most civilized nations of antiquity, what was the condition of woman? "She was immured in solitude, and could not consequently be very captivating; her manners may have been pure, and her taste innocent, but it was not thereby improved. Retirement gave her awkwardness, and awkwardness in its turn denied her admiration." So said a polished author half a century since. To the disgrace of the refined Greeks they found their chief pleasure in the society of courtesans; they gave to vice the distinction of virtue, and offered at an ignominious shrine that admiration which ought to have been the reward of the virtuous only. The same author likewise justly remarks, "That with the Greeks it was more a matter of taste, than of downright wickedness; for, while women of modesty were embosomed in solitude, and *deprived of the advantage of ever improving themselves*, their courtesans, by mixing in public circles, had acquired all the attractions which delighted; hence the unbounded attentions they received." This writer has aptly demanded, "Among such a people what was female education?"

We are certainly not kept in such awful retirement as were the women of Greece, but a taint of

the usages of their days is still visible, or why is an active woman often branded as impudent; another, if unusually interested in any subject in which her best feelings are engaged, called bold or indelicate; and a third, if somewhat wiser than the generality, shunned as a sort of annoyance? And thus, in the fashion of the refined but erring Greeks, are not tameness, stupidity, and dulness, made the representatives of virtue? while wit, animation, and talent, are considered as symbols of something very like vice.

A strange perversion of common sense it certainly was which compelled the virtuous woman to be a fool, while the licentious and impure were permitted to be lively and animated; free discourses upon affairs of state, with poets, painters, philosophers, and such like, for auditors.

That woman could in some degree regenerate society is unquestionably true; but her first task must be to *regenerate herself*; then, and not till then, can her efforts be of any avail. Not that (as some vaguely assert) she can be the sole cause of such an effect, for she forms but one half of mankind. But let that half continue as mentally subordinate, and physically enfeebled, as now, the case will be, that instead of progressing, the whole race must thereby suffer, and the onward progress be retarded.

CHAPTER II.

SOCIAL INTERCOURSE.

Poor thing of usages, coerced, compelled,
 A victim oft when wrong, a martyr oft
 When right. BYRON.

“SOCIAL institutions it is true are wanting to women, but women are more wanting to themselves.” The remark made to this effect by one of the sex is a just one, for were women only true to their own interests, those interests as well as the whole aspect of society would to a great extent be changed for the better. We must reform ourselves before we call out too loudly for assistance, though it is true that without such assistance, we cannot advance very far. Could men (our legislators) be made to perceive how much the higher interests of the race would be promoted by *our* progress, they would then, it is to be hoped, make concessions in our favour. Even now they are aware, though few of them admit this, that ignorant women are always the most difficult to manage; reason can appeal to reason, but no one

dreams of appealing to obstinate ignorance. This is the cause (I hope) why man thinks he should regulate the affairs of woman, whose ignorance and dulness prevent her from being capable of regulating them for herself, and not a desire to oppress, or take advantage of those whose means are so feeble and inadequate to resist that power, against which, however, they must sometimes either strive, or be crushed beneath. It is true that man oppresses his fellow man, but then he is more able to defend himself; his voice at least is heard, whereas a woman can only complain to herself, or, if to others, as to the heedless winds or the passing clouds.

From the present artificial rules and hypocritical usages of society, woman is made to feel how useless to her are talents, how cumbersome are natural manners, how vain the power of language, and how troublesome the faculty of thinking.

In consequence of the existing errors of opinion, and a certain long established style of etiquette, rational intercourse between the sexes is almost unknown, the prevailing tone of their conversation is generally speaking frivolous. One idea seems ever predominant in the mind of either one party or the other, that is, a suspicion of motive; as if two persons of opposite sexes, however well-informed or naturally intelligent, could not enjoy

the society of each other, without having a more intimate connexion in view. Social intercourse is based altogether upon such miserably low grounds, that we dread in the midst of it to look around, lest our eyes should encounter some image of deformity, where we looked for the reverse. I would not willingly represent matters to be worse than they are, but when we peep even for a moment behind the veil which gaily floats over their surface, we see such fearful sights, such appalling pictures, that we start back affrighted, and can scarcely admit, even to ourselves, that we have gazed upon reality, or seen the false foundation upon which the edifice rests, and the hidden springs which make the actors move. Those who glance only at the superficies of things, or judge merely from outward appearances, can have no conception whatever of the guilt, the misery, and the wretchedness which lurk beneath the specious covering. It is not necessary, I admit, that we should keep such unhappy knowledge before our eyes for ever, but we assuredly must be aware of the real state of what exists in connexion with it, foul as well as fair, before we can propose an amendment.

“To constitute proper society, there is required not only a general agreement of sentiment, but something also of the same grasp of intellect; it is

necessary that the parties, if I may so express myself, should live at the same mental rate, and their minds in operation observe a proportion." Thus speaks an accomplished writer of the present day; but is this picture anything like the method used to form what is misnamed society, as it now exists? Those who live in the same circles (though by no means mentally), generally speaking, do associate together, that is, if they can reside in mansions of equal magnitude, can dress alike extravagantly, can have the same number of dishes on their tables, the same number of horses in their stables, the same display of attendants, and so on. The possession of wealth, in short, is what principally regulates English society, and that society is considered the best and the highest, where the superfluities which money can purchase most abound.

According to this system, the poor in wealth, or the un-elevated in rank, can have no society; they are treated with undisguised contempt, as altogether unworthy of notice; and woe betide the portionless woman, however intelligent or worthy she may be, who, for a wonder, finds herself in the midst of a circle, where rank or money are the only things recognised or addressed. If young and beautiful, she will receive a few silly presents, but otherwise, none will seem aware


of her presence, and thus she is compelled to see that society is neither more or less than a company of idol worshippers met together to do homage to their respective deities.

How is it that women, so commended for their keen moral perceptions, suffer or permit this? If their influence in society is so great as some assert it to be, why is this evil not remedied? Why is our social relationship to each other so heartless and insipid, that all who are possessed of refined and true feeling, have reason bitterly to exclaim against its hollowness and artifice? Can women not choose for their companions persons of intelligence, reflection, and purity, rather than the ignorant, the coarse, or the frivolous, even should the former be poor, and the latter rich? Can they not make worth a passport to their favour, rather than a splendid attire, a heavy purse, or a shewy exterior? Can they not, in many instances, make the shaft of ridicule recoil upon the insolent being who directs it, while they protect and shelter those against whom it is aimed? Above all things, they could unquestionably defend and support each other, giving not even a momentary countenance to such individuals as endeavour to please one woman by decrying another, and who presumptuously imagine that by detracting from the virtues or talents of the absent, they wonderfully

enhance the value of the person to whom they are addressing themselves. These meannesses are so universally practised, that their very frequency makes them pass unheeded, but the vice of detraction (though by no means the peculiar property of woman) cannot be too much reprobated in itself, and as the stepping-stone to other vices of a still more serious nature.

Woman rarely deems it incumbent upon her to defend or speak in favour of those who may be blamed or found fault with; on the contrary, she commonly joins in the attack, though she is seldom courageous enough to tell her friend privately where she thinks that friend may have erred, or been imprudent. Sometimes even, she shows a kind of rejoicing, when another is spoken against; no one will acknowledge this; but the feeling at times gleams from behind the thickest covering. Woman is often enough reproached with this indifference to the happiness of her own sex; it were to be wished that the reproach was unjust, for until woman befriends woman, and corrects such errors as these just alluded to, she can make no advance towards nobility of mind, or even towards a sense of common justice. I speak here of no more than what too evidently exists, of what must be perceptible to the commonest observer; and yet woman is persuaded that she

is penetrated with feeling, and boasts of the high tone of her morality, her exquisite sense of right and wrong! It would be desirable to see this theory reduced to practice, and put in active operation; that woman should immediately begin "to choose the good and reject the evil," that all might really see her excellence, and pay homage thereto. Moreover, the standard of that excellence should be a high one, very different from the paltry mimicry which is extolled by the fashion of society, from which the right-minded turn away, lamenting that man is so prone to substitute the false for the true; ever ready to deceive himself. We may ask who, after having admired a work of the immortal Corregio, till every line of beauty had become imprinted upon his memory, would be content to possess some worthless daub, although its vain and silly artist might maintain that it equalled, perhaps surpassed, the works of that great master? If every woman carried with her into society, some model of excellence in her mental vision, after which she strove to mould herself, and kept her high aim ever in remembrance, she would not be, even in the midst of all her disadvantages, the trifler she too often is; she would be too earnest for frivolity, too intent upon her purpose to need anything to beguile away the listless hours, and consequently those trifles would



be abandoned, which are now resorted to, as the poet says,

To fill the void of an unfurnished brain,

To palliate dulness, and give time a shove.

When woman frowns from her presence the artful, the flattering, the hypocritical, and the foolish, when she judges the morality of man even more severely than that of her own sex, then will she no longer be upbraided with sanctioning those vices in the former, which she never tolerated in the latter; just as if man was *too weak* to resist sin! and woman too strong to be tempted! reversing the general belief, that man is the superior in intelligence, the stronger in judgment, and therefore (we are bound to suppose) less likely to be beguiled into vice, than simple, ignorant, and trusting woman! Yet in contradiction to all this, woman treats woman with scorn, should she be unhappy enough to walk in crooked paths, while she smiles upon man, courts him, and treats him as guiltless, and yet in the midst of this, declares herself the guardian angel of humanity!

None but the wilfully blind can find out that there are one set of commandments set forth for men and another for women; on the contrary, it is therein asserted that both are equally liable to be punished in a future world, where no respect will be paid to persons, and where happily (as we

read) there will be soul without distinction of sex.

Since all this is to be the case, would it not be as well to begin here, and make the distinction less visible? Do we run no risk of being blamed as participators in the guilt of man, when we reason perversely, and act in such a manner as to set justice at defiance? It is to be feared we do. Therefore our influence and energy should be directed to diminish a vice, which even our lawgivers are compelled to acknowledge is sapping the morals of the nation, and gnawing the heart of the social system.

Many unfortunate females may be truly called the victims of such a state of things. Since the causes which lead them to destruction as often arise from the circumstances in which they are placed as from their own evil passions; ignorance, want of employment, poverty, and lastly, though not less frequently, faith and confidence in that being who styles himself the protector of woman, swell the ranks of such victims as often as vanity, love of dress, and other worse causes.

Instead of this painful theme forming part of a chapter in such a limited work as this, volumes might be written upon the subject; a hint is all that can be afforded in the present instance, in the hope that women will try in every possible

way to discountenance this, and every other species of evil, by distinctly proving that they abhor vice, however well it may be disguised or veiled in their presence, and by showing, that if men persist in depressing and degrading women, they must in the same ratio necessarily sink the whole human family; that civilization must consequently retrograde, and feebleness of mind go hand in hand with feebleness of body.

I am perfectly aware that when a female touches upon such subjects she is considered to have come out of this sphere of her's, of which we hear so much, and yet of which so many of us have been, and are at this moment, either very ignorant or very doubtful! But without attending for a moment to such an absurd dogma, I maintain (and there are others who will agree with me) that on the contrary it is the *imperative duty of woman* to make herself not only acquainted, but fully so, with this as well as with every thing, be it good or evil, which bears upon the condition of her sex. That mock refinement is intolerable, which, though aware of the iniquity abroad, yet raises not its voice to warn the innocent, or denounce the guilty, because forsooth it might be thought indelicate! It is high time that such foolish notions of delicacy gave place to juster ones. Silence is here connivance at guilt, a mere

hypocritical semblance of ignorance, or, what is worse on the part of a woman, an indifference to the evils by which she is surrounded; an indifference most culpable surely in those who are called upon to stand forth as the regenerators of society!

Who can read without a shudder the reports of those who have lately made inquiry into the state of the morals and education of the lower classes of the people; has woman nothing to do with this? Ought she to sit with folded hands when she knows that such misery, such fearful degradation, exist in the heart of her country? Where are the famed homes of merry England, where the groups of happy children? Mothers are become poisoners of infants—fathers murderers of their children! and still we boast of our morality! Let woman be dumb about her influence, so long as such a brutal state of things exists, or let her actions leave no time for idle declamation; for certain it is, if she were willing, she might do something more than lead the fashion, or discuss the merits of a “modiste,” whose pale-faced assistants are victimized by dozens, for a trumpery show. We can scarce have faith in that feeling which finds no outlet in actions.

We continually hear of the disorders of the social system, and its wrongness; how then is it

to be amended, changed, purified; who is to infuse into it that healthier spirit which will enable its withering form to live? We may well echo these words,

Oh ! for a world in principle as chaste,
As this is gross and selfish ! over which
Custom and prejudice shall bear no sway,
Shouldering aside the meek and modest truth.

Man knows nothing except by correspondence with his fellows, and can do nothing; but, with the aid of this correspondence, what may he not accomplish? If the intelligence thus formed be turned to good, how grateful the results; if turned to evil, how fearful the consequences! We know how much a few enlightened minds can effect upon those within their influence, and how far every race of mankind may be elevated in the scale of existence. If virtue were more visible in the higher, and, rather falsely called, well-educated circles, how rapidly would the lower orders follow their example. We are notorious for aping "the manners of our betters;" therefore, if the manners of the rich and the noble were amended, plebeian improvement would speedily follow. But so long as we speak, "yet act not," there is no use in preaching homilies, which are every moment contradicted by the conduct of those who utter them.

How can those call themselves morally educated, who cheat, lie and deceive, slander their neighbours, and hoodwink their friends? intelligent they may be; so we believe are the inhabitants of the lower regions, of whose *ignorance* or *stupidity* we hear nothing, though we hear much of the wiles and snares which they lay to entrap the thoughtless and unwary.

As far as manners and morals are concerned, a book can scarcely be opened without meeting therein the assertion, that woman is the secret and silent spring which keeps us all right; that in her hands is placed that mighty engine 'the morals of society;' that she is the keeper of the soul of the social system, &c. All this sounds well, and it would be gratifying to know that we are so much honoured, did the words convey aught to us but sound; for if they are truth, how comes it that under such guardianship, society is what we behold it?—its surface fair because whitewashed; but below full of darkness and vice.

The guardian angel must either be false to her trust, which not for a moment can we believe, or there must be a stronger influence at work, which it is beyond the possibility of woman to counteract. We are daily told that our power is great, if we only knew how to use it; I regret to say that for my own part I have never yet been fully made

aware of this power, and therefore cannot recognise the influence of woman to be what it is represented. The little she has of either power or influence is crippled by the obstacles placed in her path. When she leads the way to pleasure or amusement, she is followed, and for a day, a short-lived day, is admired; when she points to stern duties, and speaks of man as the being of immortality, rather than the mere pleasure-hunter, or lover of the world; when she reasons of self-government, or the principles of self-regulation; what is the result? She is tolerated, perhaps, but laughed at for her pains; she may dance, sing, and be a child as long as she pleases, write pretty stories, string rosy words in rhyme,—but to help in devising or practising such schemes, as may be for the real benefit of mankind, becomes in her, a matter for ridicule, a subject for merriment, impertinence not to be endured!

“Poor girls are to be met with who had never sung or danced, never read a book that made them laugh, never saw a violet, a primrose, or other flowers; and others whose only idea of a green field, was derived from having been stung by a nettle!” When we read such sentences as these, can we be satisfied to dance and sing as gaily as ever,—to delight ourselves with our rare exotics, our parks, our trees, and lawns,—when the fair

human flower is dying at our feet, for want of sun and light, pining away in sadness uncheered by hope.

"The truth is plain," (again says the same observer as I have quoted before) "that in the heart of England there has arisen, and is daily growing, a vast community toiling in serfdom, adding the vice of drunkenness to the habits of animals. They are living out of the pale of almost all the humanities, which demarcate the position and conduct of man from the brute, and there they are allowed to live, and in my eyes there is no crime among them one half so great, *as in the classes above them.* The indifference of the civilization around and about it, is a far greater sin, than the mere brutality of neglected misery."

It is not to be wondered at, that many who reflect upon the misery, wretchedness, and vice, which appear to come in the train of civilization, are tempted to say, "Let us return to savage life, let us wander free in the wilds, and roam over the wide plains; let the skins of animals be our covering, roots our food, and water our drink; rather than, that clothed gorgeously, and faring sumptuously, we should task our fellow men to pamper our luxury, to feed our vanity, and, worse than all, to fill our pockets with that gold which has

been termed 'the root of all evil;'" may I not add, which is at this moment the curse of this country. In order to make money, are men doomed to a toil almost incredible; to make money, men sell both soul and body, and to get money are not women too sold, or, to their shame, do they not sell themselves? Few evils indeed exist, which in some way or other are not more or less connected with money; truly it is a demon, exerting a power almost omnipotent. Thus those things which might be the means of good, with our usual skill, we convert into engines of destruction.

So tempting is gold, that when a woman comes into its possession, trustees must be named, for the *protection of her money!* and from whom? From those who from childhood she is taught to consider her protectors! A man cannot die in peace, till he finds some other man to whom he may give the charge of his wife or daughters, and their gold,—which it is never supposed they can manage themselves; yet not unfrequently these females and their money become the prey of these very guardians. A strange anomaly all this! when will men be consistent? Until they arrive at this period in their history, women should protect themselves as much as possible, and not wait for what *may* not come. Let them

become acquainted with what is within their reach, and when they have attained this knowledge act in accordance therewith. It would surely save our male friends an infinite deal of trouble, were we able to take care of ourselves; to keep ourselves from falling into the fire, when they are not by, or tumbling through the window when they may have forgotten to shut it. For my part, I am so heartily ashamed of our helplessness, and of the fever of perpetual anxiety in which we keep our natural protectors, who have so many more important things to think of, that I conceive we should make a trial whether we cannot reflect a little for ourselves.

Nothing is more conducive to health than cheerfulness, and nothing can make us so happy as active employment of mind; thoughts intent upon the welfare and advancement of the human race. A life of action in unison with these sentiments all should endeavour to attain. It is distressing to witness that appearance of assumed cheerfulness which many women are forced to wear, as a mask lest others should perceive the real state of their feelings. The aim of all ought to be to promote purity of thought, earnestness of purpose, and justness of action, thus ensuring not a transient, but a permanent enjoyment; not a feverish excitement, but a perpetual serenity.

CHAPTER III.

MORALS—INTELLIGENCE—ACTION.

Greater is he who ruleth his own spirit, than he who taketh many cities.—*Scriptures.*

THE language of Scripture has been selected to keep us in remembrance of what true greatness really is, and in what it consists, since the minds of many appear to be confused as to the real significance of the term and its import. There are persons who consider this title, when applied to woman in any way, as doing her a positive injury, or at least committing a trespass against received opinion; for *they* believe that the perfection of a woman's character consists in being characterless. But it is that opinion which is wrong, not the fact that woman may be taught to be great, as well as man; and the very essence of this noble quality is even now required to form an essential feature of her character, under the name of self-denial or self-renunciation. Only this too is often used in a very pernicious sense, in perfect opposition to the one in the words

quoted above; and thus in its perverted meaning, lowering and depressing the mind, instead of elevating it, besides increasing selfishness and domination in those who are ever ready enough, (without such silly aid) to add to their comforts and happiness at the expense of others, less selfish, but unhappily, more ignorant than themselves.

A friend of humanity spoke eloquently of the nature of true greatness as follows: "There are different kinds of greatness; among these the first rank is unquestionably due to moral greatness or magnanimity; to that sublime energy by which the soul, smitten with the love of virtue, binds itself indissolubly for life and for death to truth and duty; espouses as its own the interests of human nature; scorns all meanness, and defies all peril; hears in its own conscience a voice louder than all threatenings and thunders; withstands all the powers of the universe, which would sever it from the cause of freedom and religion; reposes an unfaltering trust in God in the darkest hour, and is ever ready to be offered up on the altar of its country, or of humanity."

It is this highest order of greatness, of which I wish to see my sex in some degree possessed, the acquirement of which cannot be so difficult to them as to man, if it be true that woman is gifted

with the higher moral nature of the two. I say, *if it be true*, for which doubt I fear I shall incur the displeasure of those whose favour I would bespeak, and whose friendship I value; but I am obliged to say, that from all the observations I have made, all the thoughts I have bestowed upon the nature of woman, I have not yet seen this so clearly demonstrated, as I would like to believe it may be. From the time that woman can speak, and becomes conscious of her own identity, she is so incessantly told of the marked difference that there must be between her thoughts and actions, and those of man, that by dint of sheer training she is made to believe that she has received a more fragile nature, and is made of gentler, though inferior stuff to him; a sort of pretty ware, easily broken or scratched, while he is of strong clay, a species of Dutch delf, able to stand rough encounter, and in its stability and strength to endure the tear and wear, which it is sure to meet. Yet woman thus daintily nurtured, and filled with such fantastic notions of beauty, delicacy, and gentleness, to such a degree, that she dare scarcely chide save in a whisper, is thrown into this vulgar, every-day world, to *struggle*, literally, in the best way she can, with all the coarse delf creatures she meets, and where she is speedily bewildered, if not lost. And why?

Because she has been taught to float in a kind of Elysium of feeling and sentiment, to dream of what is *not*, at least what is not on earth *as yet*; and is thus prevented from being prepared or strengthened either bodily or mentally, to encounter (which she inevitably must,) this disordered, chaotic world; where strength is still power, where darkness still contends against light, and where poetry is no where but in books, or in the brains of a few enthusiasts, (as they are called,) held in little repute by the worldly wise, being considered somewhat *feminine* in their pursuits and ideas.

It is to enable woman to support herself in this too real strife, that there ought to be some change made in her habit of regarding herself; not that she should descend from her elevation, but that she may look to its foundation, and see whether it has any, or if it be broad and deep. But let her beware of merely fancying anything—let her exert her understanding, and become morally great in action as well as in words—and further, she must be wise too, as well as good, or she is but partially great.

As all human beings, having a moral nature, may reach to some degree of moral grandeur or greatness, *theoretically* acknowledged to be the highest kind of greatness, let woman aspire to the

divine possession, which belonging to the undying part of our existence, constitutes what may with propriety be called the affections of the soul. It is of the utmost importance here, as well as hereafter, that such exalted emotions should be developed, and then placed upon those things only, which, like themselves, are imperishable.

With regard to moral greatness, men fall into strange delusions; they proclaim aloud that the Christian virtues are the noblest and most worthy of imitation; yet in every action of their lives, they prove how much more delighted they are with what, in distinction may be called heathen virtues; those that were held in highest estimation in ancient times, and resulting chiefly from deeds of arms. The mighty conquerors of kingdoms, the founders of empires, and the ‘takers of many cities,’ these were the great of the earth before the dawn of that morning when the human race received, direct from heaven, the glad tidings of good to come, the message which told that war must one day cease; which overturned the false ideas of the world, and announced that there was speedily to arise a new order of things; since what men called great and good was of no value in the sight of God, but would be found utterly useless in that futurity, for which this present existence is our school of training. How foolish

then to acquire with infinite trouble, what shall be of as little worth hereafter, as the bubbles of soap, which the child expends its breath in blowing.

Let us not be confused and deceived by the conduct of those, who act as if there was one standard of moral greatness for man, and another for woman; who preach up a set of severe doctrines for the latter, and yet give the former a fearful latitude; who judge us by the most rigid rules, yet act themselves as if they were amenable to other laws than our's. As if they had a different faith, a different creed, and a different God; or had received a license to sin, while we, *called* the weaker, were to be treated (on earth at least) with the utmost rigour.

This strange injustice has often perplexed me; —to see woman treated as a child unable to guide itself, and yet punished as if she were a giant, and for those very sins too, which these sage moralists first lead her to commit, and for which they afterwards insult and chastise her! This is the justice and morality of man! But if man judges woman by a standard of his own erecting, woman ought to judge both of him and herself by that of truth, the universal rule for all, which allows of no such specious artifice, no such trifling with its sacredness, but which speaks to both sexes

alike, having one command for both. Happy will that time be, when man shall be compelled to acknowledge that virtue is of no sex, that what is sin in woman is sin in man, and that what is virtue in the one *must* be virtue in the other, and when every virtue must be sought for equally in both. Until then we can have little hope of social improvement to any extent. Let no woman call that man her friend, who has one rule of morality for her, and another for himself. The longer she tolerates such a false and pernicious system, the longer unquestionably does she retard the progress of the whole race. Why should the vicious among men be deemed fit companions, while the vicious among women are shunned with a more than pious horror? as if an angel had become a demon, instead of a weak ignorant human being having committed precisely the same fault, and walked in the same path as those whom she is perpetually told are her superiors in wisdom and knowledge; those to whom she is taught to look for advice and protection. The marvel is, not that she should err, and follow such leaders; but that the errors of the teacher should be visited upon the docile pupil!

Next to greatness of soul, comes greatness of intelligence; the proper use of those powers of mind with which we have been endowed by the

bounteous giver of all. The faculties from whence in many ways pleasure may flow towards us, cannot be too highly prized, or cultivated too assiduously; for what have not philosophy, science, and poetry done to unfold the wonders of nature, to enlighten and refine those nations which have happily dwelt beneath the influence of their miracle-working powers.

Are such pursuits, then, beyond, or within the magic circle called "the sphere of woman?" A silly phrase, which has done more harm to our sex than can well be told; since before a woman commences any undertaking, follows any branch of study, these words are rung in her ears as a warning, lest in some unguarded hour she should step without the mystic ring, beyond which she is told she can have no existence, at least no *charmed* existence. Breaking this spell, she is of course forced to become a sort of nondescript, belonging neither to one sphere or another, and having come out of her fool's paradise, from sheer weariness, she looks around for some other resting-place, but as it is decreed she finds none! Such being the sad fact, no wonder that these mysterious words, spoken with the majesty of oracle, should have their effect; woman pauses in her exertions if not her wishes, saying in a trembling voice, "How awful must it be for me to step

beyond my proper sphere! How fearfully I shall be punished! I think I must wait till I find out distinctly what this sphere of mine is!”

As we happen, however, to have minds as well as souls, reason as well as feeling, it is certain that in our future and more perfect state (should we now neglect to cultivate these gifts), we shall find, that whether we were within the circle described by man, or without it, we were not fulfilling our duty towards God, who has given nothing in vain, bestowed no talent to be folded in a napkin, and shed no light to be hidden. Therefore let us endeavour to be intellectually great, since gentleness is of more value when united with wisdom, than when it stands alone, a melancholy, rather than a pleasing, spectacle; ever apt to degenerate into smiling insipidity.

We know that if a stringed instrument remains long unused, instead of being fit to produce sounds of harmony, the strings become broken or relaxed, and much trouble and labour is needed to put it in train for use. Thus it is with the human mind; if left neglected, it becomes useless, and if left beyond a certain time in disorder, it becomes a more than herculean task to restore its wasted energies, for in vain comes the aid of the physician when the disease is inveterate and incurable. Let us then remember that

we have minds which demand our care, faculties to be developed, powers to be strengthened, and that none are sinless who neglect this important employment. Besides, what a fund of real happiness do they open up, an enjoyment dependant upon no external circumstances, which can be valued and can charm at all times. Is that not worth the trouble of acquiring which can delight us, whether we are rich or poor, whether we are in health or sickness, in youth or old age?

In consequence of the want of mental pursuits, nay, proper employment of any kind, women often become the prey of inanity and nervousness to such an extent that the latter is in numerous cases the very bane of their existence, and is becoming more common every day, since *perfect idleness*, mental and bodily, has been considered the chief feature and characteristic of "*a lady*." How can it be otherwise? Nature cannot be trampled upon with impunity, and no human being was ever created for such a purposeless, monotonous life, as that of complete inactivity. It would be far better to be engaged in the most menial occupation, than to doze away the hours on a sofa, dressed like a doll or milliner's block, looking at hands so white and soft, that their pretty owner is driven to despair if the idea should flash across her, that perhaps some day

she may be compelled to use them, whether she will or not. It seems quite an effort for some of these gentle beings to exert their minds, even for a few minutes; if requested to give their opinion upon any subject, unconnected with pleasure, they look as much surprised and confused as we might expect those to do, who consider reflection as a something with which they have no concern.

Women ought to know that it is not only right to think, but that it is as incumbent upon them as upon men, to form opinions upon every subject which is of importance, seeing that they have been gifted with an equal capacity for so doing. Nothing relative to this subject can give greater satisfaction than to peruse the works of those women (of whom we may indeed be proud) who, in spite of all the disadvantages of female education, and the jealousy of the other sex, have earned for themselves a title to take their place among the ablest of the latter. Though so long as men alone are our critics and judges, the highest intelligence which ever appeared on earth, if possessing the outward form of a woman, would be pronounced, though wonderful for a female, yet, as partaking of the inferior qualities of the sex, fit only for—oblivion! while, under the masculine name, the same production would be preserved with a veneration amounting nearly to idolatry!

It is to be lamented that women encourage each other so little in those pursuits which can alone dignify and exalt the human character. There is nothing more revolting than the depreciation of women by women; if we were more deeply interested in each other's welfare we would rejoice when we heard of the eminence of a sister, and do what lay in our power to encourage and defend such gentle spirits as the cold breath of heartlessness might chill, or the words of insolent coarseness might annihilate. In men, as well as in women, talent and worth are often accompanied by great timidity, and by much distrust of self, while the mediocre are so penetrated with a sense of their own wisdom, that they are impervious to that which wounds and depresses more sensitive and superior minds. Hence the need of inspiriting the former, and leaving the latter to the support of their own vanity, which helps them on sufficiently, in this age of puffing and smoke.

The result of moral and mental greatness must be greatness of action, or what may be termed the embodiment of greatness, arising from feeling and thought. If women remain thinking and feeling, without putting their thoughts into practice, their work is only half done, and they will continue to be the idle dreamers they are called. That woman

has been and may again be great, even in action, none dare deny, great even in the world's acceptance of the word, when it speaks of what has constituted its statesmen, warriors, and demigods, of every sort. If we must have female warriors, their names are not awanting in the page of history. Such examples are numerous in various ages and of different nations, but no detail can be given here. An instance or two, however, may be alluded to.

We read of female Crusaders performing wonders of valour; we know of a Zenobia and other warlike queens, neither can we forget our own heroic Bonduca:

The fierce Bonduca, brave and injured queen,
Who bids her barbarous wrongs, her vengeful rage,
Tell the dark story of the Roman age;

and Ethelfleda, who commanded armies, gained victories, built cities, and performed exploits, which would have done honour to the greatest of princes*. Besides, how many may be named familiar to all, belonging to more modern times, like the females who were found among the slain in the struggle of the democratic Swiss Cantons against the hordes of France. Further, we may point to the glory of those still greater souls who

* HENRY'S *History of England*.

perished in the flames of martyrdom, enduring persecutions far more fearful to brave than the conflict of battle, however fierce and deadly, and who were as calm and heroic in death as it was possible for mortals to be.

We have likewise women who were great as rulers; Isabella of Spain, Maria Theresa, our own Elizabeth, and many others, who governed with the utmost policy and power of mind.

I mention such women as examples of what the sex *can* be, not to hold them up as complete patterns of what women *ought* to be, as it is the few of either sex who are ever placed in a position where the qualifications for the proper discharge of the arduous task of legislation are required. But as the great of the earth, these women must surely divide the praise with those who are so ready to exclaim, "that a woman can be none of those things." Diplomacy, being little else than cunning on a grand scale, transformed into an appearance of wisdom, because employed on subjects of high importance, is not an occupation much to be coveted, until the motives and springs of action employed therein are of a different nature. It is only selfishness to an enormous amount; the selfishness of nations instead of that of individuals, the source of much injustice, fraud and deception.

The horrors of war are to be deprecated, and no war but a defensive one can be altogether justifiable; but, were such a calamity as war to befall us, would the woman who could in any way encourage or inspire others to fight, or even die for her country, not deserve well of her compatriots?

In the sacred page we have a Judith and a Jael mentioned, because they slew the enemies of their people; and Charlotte Corday was a patriot, who rid her country of one who was a monster in cruelty, when, as she supposed for the welfare of her nation, she sacrificed herself.

Can we forget the high-minded Madame Roland, whose fortitude "was that of a sage, and her death that of a hero."

Woman can, if she will, be all and everything that is noble, great or good, but her danger lies in the worship of the false, not of the true. The greatest individual is the one who can best aid in the mental and moral elevation of his country; through whose counsel peace is secured, and war avoided; whatever constitutes a great and good man, must constitute a great and good woman. Greatness does not consist in the particular kind of occupation, for occupations must from necessity differ in various individuals; it consists rather in a spiritual appreciation of nobility of sentiment, grandeur, and extent of intellectual power, and

actions correspondent therewith. It matters not under what peculiar form these actions may appear, provided this spirit animates and produces them; by the fruit it bears shall the tree be known.

CHAPTER IV.

DIGNITY OF CHARACTER.

——— In my soul I loathe
 All affectation, 'tis my perfect scorn,
 Object of my implacable disgust.—COWPER.

How very rarely do we meet with what in justice can be called a dignified woman! In place of dignity we see a species of hauteur, a mock solemnity of countenance, or a cold and aristocratic stateliness of deportment, meant to show the standing of certain persons in society; a sort of insignia of rank, or office. Such manifestations do not constitute dignity, any more than high-sounding words convey wisdom, or than purple and gold make royalty.

Dignity of bearing must proceed from elevation of mind, and she who would be truly dignified, must first seek that internal greatness treated of in the preceding chapter, before she can hope to have the outward sign.

The present times, certainly, are not very favourable for the acquirement of this deportment, but that is just the reason why our country-

women should not altogether forget, that dignity of manner is something worth seeking for, being infinitely beyond those monkey-like gestures and grimaces, which may be fashionable enough, it is true, but which convey to others no impression of character or mind whatever. It is now the mode to ridicule the ceremonious courtesies of the last century, when men made solemn bows and women profound curtsies; when manners were grave, and politeness was considered a virtue. Our good ancestors may have been, perhaps, too tragical for every-day life, but surely even that was more to be commended than the brusque manners of our own days. Age now meets with little respect, and all appear to consider it a duty to remember no one but themselves; jostling past every one they meet; laughing, talking at the pitch of their voices, and abusing whatever displeases them, in language, now, unfortunately, so common, that the words seem to have lost their proper significance. This is not confined to vulgar and common practice, but in our legislative assemblies, with our press, at our public meetings, the same exaggerated phraseology and somewhat intolerant spirit prevail.

Could those who *are said* to give the tone to manners not amend this as well as other things? Can they not refrain, at least, from *encouraging*

this vicious custom? If they have no weight in public, we are told that their private influence is immense; then why not use it to modify or mitigate such *brusquerie*? Instead of a system of perpetual cavil, could we not have something more rational than barking and biting to such a pitch, that he who makes the greatest noise, is applauded as the Solon of the assembly?

We know that much depends on the manner or appearance; that the most serious and dignified individuals claim the most respect, warding off lightness and insolence, putting a bridle upon that exuberance of animal spirits which leads to silly and irrational jesting, or is expended upon amusements of a dangerous or low description. Were women to show more respect for dignity in others, and seek to acquire more of it themselves, the manners, as well as the morals of society would speedily undergo a transformation for the better; we should not then see men assuming one tone and manner when addressing us, and another when addressing each other, as if we were too trifling and light-headed to be pleased with anything but what might amuse grown up children, just emerged from the nursery! Are women or men to be blamed for this? Both. Men ridicule and despise women for their ignorance, yet never choose to enlighten them; women, on the other hand, by

not making use of the resources within their power, by feeling no interest in affairs of real importance, are unfit to converse with those who do, therefore when spoken with at all, it must be on such subjects as are familiar to them.

There is a virtue in manners as well as in morals, for generally speaking our manners or deportment proceed from the cast of our thoughts and occupations; if these are frivolous and insignificant, so must be our outward bearing. It has been often asserted that habitual nobility of sentiment and thought, lends a dignity to the appearance, a high and lofty expression to the countenance, which are more attractive and command more homage, than the mere beauty of features, unilluminated by expression. The dignity with which every woman ought to be adorned, is that calm repose and serenity, which tells of a well-regulated and enlightened mind, a cultivated judgment, and feelings under the control of reason, saving their possessor from being the sport of every changing impulse. These gusts of fitful feeling to which so many women give way, in the end impress upon their features an expression which is the very opposite of dignity; worthy pursuits combined with earnestness of purpose can alone ensure a noble demeanour; these blent together in harmony stamp an impression upon

the appearance not to be mistaken, which, when united with cheerfulness and activity, produce an agreeable and untiring effect.

Cheerfulness is thought a rather homely virtue, but its possession is almost more to be coveted than anything else; without this sunlight in the mind, every attribute has a gloomy and ghost-like appearance; we feel as if the curtain of night were drawn around, and a vague sensation of sadness oppresses us. There may be brilliant flashes now and then, as the lightning gleams across the dark sky, but the lightning's flash can never compensate for the loss of the sun, or the most magnificent aurora borealis atone for the want of the vivifying rays of the light of morning. We all dislike variable weather; one hour bright and warm, another cold and cloudy; the uncertainty annoys us. How much more then, can an ever changing humour annoy and disconcert us! This is far too little thought of; some women imagine that they have a right to be cheerful or not, as it may suit themselves. But there is no truth in such an idea; for no one has the right to act in such a way as to give pain to another.

Were women more employed in the contemplation of high and really inspiring objects, fretfulness and unsteadiness of temper would find no place within the mind so engaged; it is idleness

and trifling which nourish such noxious weeds, and active, earnest employment that kills them. Were we to keep our future destiny, our future prospects, habitually in view; we should find ample occupation in fitting ourselves for our heavenward destination; there would be less yawning away of the listless hours, and of the adorning of our persons, to the utter neglect of the adornment or expansion of our minds. If women bestowed one tenth part of that trouble upon their mental development, which they bestow upon the framework inclosing the gem, we should find them serious and dignified, their looks speaking of the "high resolve" which would then pervade their being,—the lofty bearing which told of the divine essence within,—instead of beholding them indolent, dreamy-like creatures, drest like model blocks in a milliner's show-room, and whose sole ambition would seem to be, to outshine all rivals in caps or bonnets, shawls or lace.

Is this what can fit them for the stern affairs of every-day existence, not to speak of that next stage in our career in a future life? Can trifling ever lead to earnestness? Does it not rather diminish all mental energy? And yet, are not all our powers, all our strength, sometimes barely sufficient to enable us to wind our way through the trials and severities of the present life?

How is it then that women continue to trifle on in the midst of serious and solemn realities; since such trifling can never make them either earnest companions or fit educators of sons and daughters? How can that being inspire respect or friendship who has not the magnet which alone attracts,—true dignity of character? To be admired and caressed for mere *personal* beauty, is such a degrading sort of homage, that it is singular women do not rather shrink from, than seek it. When that beauty fades, to what can they then trust for receiving the admiration which to many is as the very breath of their nostrils; they may try other substitutes, but in vain; for as long as women are willing to be considered merely as lovely, and pleasing to the eye, they will find no admirer for anything else. It would be well to endeavour to know how to live not *upon*, but *without* such admiration, and then use every effort to make the other sex render homage to that which alone is deserving of it.

Let the influence of woman in all dignity and earnestness be made use of, to shew men what really deserves the name of excellence, and let it be seen whether that sex can as easily be influenced to become virtuous and noble, as they are now influenced to become selfish, unjust, deceptious, and despotic. Who, or what makes them

so? Why is the lauded influence of woman so invisible in its effects? Why is good so swallowed up in a sea of evil? Woman is as yet too inert, too careless of her vocation; she must become *truly* moral, rational, dignified, and intelligent, before she can hope to see any change effected upon our present social institutions and customs; her feelings, about which volumes are written, must be turned into proper channels, before we speak of social regeneration.

A word must be said here upon what is deemed the besetting sin of woman, "love of dress and ornament," as there is unfortunately only too much reason for such an accusation against her. The tasteless and fantastic manner in which women adorn themselves is certainly deplorable; the profusion of tagrags, scraps of ribbon, gauzes, and other trumpery, of which the use or even the beauty is difficult to ascertain, render their appearance at times, both ridiculous and grotesque; though from custom both sexes seem enchanted with the method discovered of deforming the human figure. It is nearly impossible for a woman to retain any dignity of appearance, with a bonnet half-way off her head, apparently struggling to prevent itself from burthening the shoulders; a shawl in the same agony, dragged down to exhibit the back of the

neck, which in consequence of such an exposure, assumes a most extraordinary shape, disclosed midway between the falling bonnet and receding cachemire. Such a walking dress is sufficiently inelegant, and void of grace; but what shall be said of the full dress, wherein women (*not* young, blooming Hebes, in whom the folly might almost be forgiven) vie with each other in exposure of shoulders, and busts whose scanty curtain is scarcely sufficient to redeem the possessors from the charge of immodesty. From what perversion of mind and want of taste does this profuse exhibition of the person arise? which it is certain in the majority of cases, gives pain rather than pleasure to the beholder. If women are not anxious to dress with simplicity and taste, every one sufficiently independent to do so according to her own fancy and with a regard to what becomes her, at all events they may avoid this worst of all defects, and they can cease to annoy if they fail to charm. Another great amendment would be to suit the outward garments to the years of the wearer. At present such a consistency is not thought of, girls of fifteen dress, or are dressed, (for there is no free choice allowed, no appeal must be made from the decisions of the goddess of fashion,) precisely as their venerable grand aunts or grand mamas, and until the face is visible, it is difficult to know

the one from the other, so exactly is the *tout ensemble* of the senior made to resemble that of the junior. The fairy form of youth, with its elasticity and buoyancy, is made to move heavily along, fearful of deranging at every step, the formal drapery encumbering its movements. In graceful motion there is both beauty and dignity, when natural and unaffected; but the studied step and turn of the head can never be otherwise than ungraceful, call them by what name you may.

Another ingredient which enters largely into the formation of a dignified character, is the use which is made of speech, that noble attribute of man, which may be made the means of conveying our highest aspirations, or perverted and made subservient to the lowest of purposes and utterly desecrated. Next to the power of thought, is that of language important, and we ought surely not to debase what *may* be so highly exalted. It is of much consequence, that women should speak well in every sense of the word, as it is said, that among their other *minor* qualities they are especially delighted to use their tongues. Whether this be true or not, we may observe that the talented of both sexes generally speak a great deal, and instead of persons being silent in society, all ought to contribute in some way or other to the conversation there, giving information when able,

or amusing and delighting with any accomplishment in which they excel.

It is to be regretted that women speak very indifferently; their words often lose all effect by the silly tone in which they are uttered. When another differs from them, they rarely take the trouble to prove themselves in the right, and abandon their sentiments as if it was of no importance what they thought. It is not requisite that the "gentle sex" should become pugnacious disputants, but they should speak with firmness, seriousness, and from conviction; there ought to be an earnestness about them which would command attention, a something beyond mere sound; for although purity of style is to be prized, yet the thoughts themselves are the first thing to be considered; they are the soul of language, whereas the sound is only the medium through which they become known.

As our souls are said to beam forth from our eyes, so let them be heard in music from our lips; I grant, however, that it is better to remain silent, than to waste the attention of others by insipid and vapid remarks. But since much may be learned from judicious conversation, let women cease to speak *instinctively*, that they may be able to speak *intelligently*, so that it may be apparent they have been gifted with minds as well as with tongues!

CHAPTER V.

KNOWLEDGE.

How shall I speak thee, or thy power address,
 Thou god of our idolatry, the press?
 By thee, religion, liberty, and laws,
 Exert their influence, and advance their cause;
 By thee worse plagues than Pharaoh's land befell,
 Diffused—make earth the vestibule of hell;
 Thou fountain at which drink the good and wise,
 Thou ever-bubbling spring of endless lies;
 Like Eden's dread probationary tree,
 Knowledge of good and evil is from thee.—COWPER.

THE remark is constantly made, that men are known by the choice of their companions; and, it may be added, by the choice of their books. We naturally seek those things which give us most pleasure; thus, if our tastes are pure and refined, so will be our enjoyments; if, on the contrary, they are vicious, so will be our pursuits. Nothing possesses over us greater influence than books, and we may judge of a nation as of an individual by the literature it produces and cherishes.

The morals as well as the intelligence of a people depend much upon that mighty engine, the Press; that wondrous power, which may either fall as a

refreshing dew, producing life and health, or sweep along as a blighting wind, heralding disease and death. Those persons, therefore, ought to be careful indeed, who sway or influence such a powerful means of good or evil, welfare or destruction; for as a country advances in civilization, and consequently in free institutions, the greater such a power becomes, and the more left in freedom to be exercised for weal or woe. That this leviathan now and then works mischief is not to be wondered at, for in his folly what invention has not man made subservient to the gratification of evil passions? When literature descends to pamper diseased appetite, or fritters itself away to cater to a taste not over-refined, then it neglects its best office, and through it the common or universal mind of the country becomes vitiated; seeking in its unhealthiness always for more and more of an aliment, which, when obtained, adds fuel to the flame that, far from being fanned and increased, ought to be extinguished by a plentiful supply of what is most fitted to oppose it. The proper business of the press is, to raise the standard of morals as well as of thought; not to leave its lofty station to please the multitude, but rather to endeavour to elevate and ennoble all within the reach of its almost omnipotent power. I use the word Press in its widest sense,—as inclusive of all kinds

of writing; not confining it to the public journals, to which, in the more limited signification, the word is usually applied. With that particular branch of writing, women are not permitted to interfere, though we may ask why are they debarred from expressing themselves through such a medium, as well as through others. For if woman be so eminently moral as she is said to be, her influence might here be made of much avail, in diffusing her sentiments for the benefit of the community at large.

England, it would appear, is not yet sufficiently enlightened for such unheard-of doings; we must "bide our time," and exercise patience, until the day of illumination arrives, when mental and not material wants shall prevail in the world. Meanwhile let woman do what she can in preparation for better days; wherever a fraction of influence can be exercised, let that fraction not be wanting.

But as we are permitted, in some measure, to be what is termed *literary*, it is desirable to call our attention to this subject, and to investigate as far as possible, to what extent we have any influence upon the public mind, either through our writings, or our approval or disapproval of certain kinds of composition, which at present are so much in fashion.

In the department of what is called light litera-

ture, woman might certainly exercise a greater power than she yet does, in elevating the moral standard of such species of composition, both through her own efforts, and through the rejection of whatever has a downward tendency. It is encouraging to see so many female pens employed for the instruction and recreation, the refinement and adornment, of the human mind; we can boast of many who are not merely an ornament to their own sex, but bright gems amidst the human race. Happily we have in England no authoress whose writings tend to deteriorate the moral part of our nature, though there may be a few who by cramping their intellect, are apt to instil into the minds of their readers a contracted mode of exercising their faculties. It ought ever to be borne in mind that our noblest powers cannot be *too much* developed; the more they embrace the better are their possessors fitted for the business of existence. In consequence of the obstruction of her mind, its retardment in its path onwards, woman cannot possibly have that influence she otherwise might attain to.

To be content to occupy an inferior station, when there is possibility of reaching a higher one, is a very ignoble sentiment, and it is impossible to know what woman may effect in literature until she tries. In past times a literary woman was

something worth while; she studied hard, and made many efforts before she gained the title, but now, in consequence of the demand for light reading, "light writers" are become numerous, who seem to skim over the sunny surface, in a manner perhaps elegant enough, but with exertions of the very slightest kind; like larks soaring aloft in the sky, their motions so aërial, as to be nearly imperceptible to those even who are delighted by their songs. Women do this, but they might do more. When we live in the same age as a Johanna Baillie, a Mary Somerville, and several such, we ought not to rest satisfied with a *médiocre* progress, but should task ourselves, and prove of what stuff our minds are really made. If there does exist a difference between the mind of man and that of woman (as is alleged), this does not necessarily involve inferiority on the part of the female; that difference *may* exist (I say not that it *does*), and yet each be as valuable as the other. I will not enter upon this disputed question, however much I may be inclined to do so, as it would lead me too far from my purpose, involving as it does many grave considerations, and depending upon so many intricate causes. My object is simply to endeavour to persuade woman to perfect her nature, as much as the means within her reach permit her to do, before she grasps at more. But

I would have no one rest contented with the common belief that there is a sex in mind, since we are infinitely more the creatures of training and circumstances, than many deem it safe to admit.

Much has to be undone, and as much more done, before woman should be unalterably convinced of what powers she has been endowed with by the Deity, and to what extent these may be developed. I write at present not so much to state grievances, or to dilate upon the vicious training of my sex, as to strive to produce all the good, which may be extracted in connexion with existing usages.

One remark, however, must be made upon the presumed difference of mind. It seems to be admitted (I hope in earnest), that woman has a more refined, more moral, more spiritual mind than man; from this we must argue that she is the more fitted for Heaven, and the society of the blessed; and from this we must further infer that she is better than man,—nay, has a decided claim to superiority, in so far, as angelic beings must always be considered of higher race than mortals! But, on the other hand, what says universal *practice*, that thing more convincing of real feeling on the subject than a thousand such frothy assertions? it says, in direct opposition to all this, that woman is a poor weak-minded being, who

must be guided in all things by man; whom it is her duty to regard as a superior piece of composition, a perfect Hercules in strength and wisdom compared to her.

If women would open their eyes, and see things as they literally and truly are, they would not be lulled asleep by phrases, which not only mean nothing, but which are glaringly contradicted by the constant and most common circumstances of daily life.

Upon general literature it *cannot* be seen that woman exercises any influence worth the name; she is led more by the opinion of others, than others are impressed by what she either says, or writes, or does; yet were she to exert herself, she might obtain a partial share of that power which is denominated influence. A power the most irresistible on earth; so much so, that we are more the creatures of influences than of dogmas, and our efforts should be so directed as to place ourselves, as well as others, under influences which are wholesome; to shun all positions, and resist all laws, whose operations exercise a baneful, or even doubtful effect, upon our understandings, or our sympathies. So much has of late been written upon the never to be exhausted theme of influence, that the person who does not comprehend its omnipotence, must be dull indeed!

Am I then forced to tell woman that she is almost without this power, though she fantastically dreams that she possesses it? were such the case in earnest, would society be what it is? Or shall I say that she *does* possess it, and that her influence tends to evil! Woman (in her imagination) waves this wand of the magician; but when we look around for the effects, instead of a garden of roses rising to view, there is but a dreary wilderness, or a void; in vain do we seek to trace the footmarks of the angel, the waves of ignorant self-interest, cruelty, and oppression, wash the faint impress away.

There is often brought forward as an argument for the immortality of the soul, the strong desires and wishes which breathe and aspire towards a future existence, as it is believed that we would not have such vehement aspirations, were they not one day to be realized. Might we not argue in the same manner with regard to a thirst for knowledge, that we would not possess it, unless we had the power of appreciating, and the capability of enjoying that for which we thirsted, and which was designed to be given to all, who thus desired it?

In this way we may be certain that if the acquirement of knowledge is praiseworthy in a man, it must be so likewise in the woman who

shows an equal anxiety to obtain it, as the wish would not be in *her*, were she not capable of gratifying it. Having this wish, is she to suppress it, and put something less noble in its stead? It would almost seem as if man wished her to do so, from the ridicule and discouragement by which such efforts are perpetually met. When even a father recommended his daughters “to conceal their wit, their learning, and even their good sense! *in deference to the natural malignity*, with which most men regard every woman of a sound understanding and cultivated mind,”—when men thus openly speak of the dislike of their sex in general to rational women,—what are we to infer, but that they will take every means to prevent them from becoming those objects of dread and hatred? Yet, in justice it must be said, that men are now not quite *so ignorant* as in bygone days; the unmanly tribe of satirists has disappeared, and we have now few, if any, imitators of a Juvenal or a Pope.

As man is by no means infallible in his opinions, and as woman is responsible for her actions, not to him, but to the all-wise Deity, who has implanted in her whatever powers she has, we may take the liberty to think that we honour God aright, when we expand our minds by becoming more acquainted with ourselves. We have varied

duties to perform to ourselves as well as to others, and there is none of them which can be neglected with impunity.

To return to books: why should light literature be so extensively patronized, and that of a severer kind scarcely noticed? The main support of circulating libraries, abounding in the ephemeral productions of the day, are women, indolent women, who read chiefly for amusement to beguile a tedious hour, when they have nothing better to do. Recreation of mind is, however, sometimes absolutely needful, and nothing is better for this purpose, than some of the humorous pictures of life, so exquisitely delineated by several of our best writers. But these productions are not the daily food which strengthens and invigorates; they are delicacies or luxuries to be indulged in but sparingly, else they produce unhealthy appetite and disease. Women are not permitted to criticize, at least not publicly; but they might find other efficient methods of shewing what were the kinds of works they most appreciated, denouncing such as they considered trifling or injurious, by neither reading or recommending them.

As women, our thanks are due to those of our sex who have taken so much pains to prove, that women in *every* age have shown a predilection for mental pursuits, and followed out the bent of

that inclination, as far as the limited opportunity ever offered to them permitted. Yet I doubt if these works, compiled with no small care, and for which much laborious research was necessary, have been as much read, as some of a trashy description. This must be disheartening to those who were so much in earnest when they wrote, those who really and truly desire the advancement of their sex, and who spare no pains to raise them up, whenever it is possible to do so. An admirable work, profoundly and philosophically written, must be mentioned, as deserving of the attention of those "whom it most concerns," the name of the writer unknown, (to me, at least,) entitled *Woman's Rights and Duties, by a Woman*, the production of a thoughtful mind, of one whose learning is neither small or meagre, and who has made the subject her study for years. Such works ought to be valued as they deserve to be, and read, *instead* of many of the milk and water productions on the same subject, with which it is the fashion to favour us under various gentle titles*.

Until the literary taste of woman demands a

* Since the foregoing was written, it is satisfactory to observe that this valuable work has been reviewed by two of our leading literary organs, and by them has been highly, as well as justly, praised.

strengthening aliment, it can hardly be perceived how she can produce much influence in turn upon the literature of the day, when whatever makes her laugh, cry, or shiver, is eagerly sought after, while she as quickly turns away from what is grave, or requires concentration of attention. Of course I speak always of the many; were there no exceptions, the picture would be dismal enough. It is distressing in the extreme to see fine-looking, and naturally well endowed women, turning out nothing better than grown-up children, "pleased with a rattle," delighted with every kind of toy, whether in the shape of "picture books, new red shoes, or gay blue sashes!" Did I love my sex less, I would not say so much; I almost wish to make them angry, that they may prove me wrong, by becoming what they ought to be.

It is true that in history there have been handed down to us few female names connected with literature, in comparison with those of men; but in spite of male jealousy and detraction, in spite of every disadvantage against women, *some* have found their way to us from ages long since past away.

A Spanish book, entitled *El Teatro Critico*, mentions the following instances of literary women in that country, who may be mentioned here for this reason only, that they seem to have

met with encouragement:—"Isabella de Joya, in the sixteenth century, preached in the cathedral of Barcelona, and solved many points in the books of the subtile Scotus, before the whole college of cardinals.

"Oliva Sabuco de Nantes is said to have written excellently on *physical*, medical, moral, and *political* subjects.

"Bernara Ferreyra is described as well versed in *rhetoric*, *philosophy*, and *mathematics*.

"Juanna Morella is said to have possessed a profound knowledge of *philosophy*, *divinity* and *jurisprudence*, besides speaking *fourteen* different languages."

We also read of the names of women in Italy, Germany, and France.

The celebrated Agnesi, a Milanese, born in 1718, of such extraordinary talents and profound mathematical attainments, that when her father, a Professor in the University of Bologna, was unable to lecture owing to bad health, she obtained permission from the Pope to fill his chair.

What do those of our own days say to this? would a woman in the present age (in this country) be permitted to lecture on abstruse subjects? on the contrary, when she proposes to lecture on any subject whatever, no matter how common-place, directly a hue and cry is raised about "feminine

delicacy and womanly modesty!"—though, at the same moment, men rush to theatres and concert rooms to see women act, dance, and sing, without uttering one syllable of discouragement; just as if every thing was right which could steal away their senses, while all which reminded them that they were fitted for nobler gratification was to be deprecated, provided it came — from the lips of a woman. If the voice of woman be so alluring and magical in the pursuit of mere pleasure, can it not still be so when uttering grave truths, as well as when pouring forth vapid nonsense or love songs?

I must allude to the Italian female, who had a Doctor's degree conferred upon her by a university, and gave lectures, in the fifteenth century, which were much frequented.

Also Laura Creti, a native of Brescia, in the sixteenth century, who taught philosophy in that city at the age of eighteen; and others whom I need not mention.

In Germany there were Roswitha and Anna Maria Schürmann.

As for French women they are so numerous, and so well known, that I need scarcely refer to a Scuderi gaining the prize of the French Academy for eloquence, or a D'Acier.

In England we have had a Lady Jane Gray, and a daughter of Sir Thomas More, styled a literary

phenomenon, who wrote so purely and elegantly in Latin, that Cardinal Pole could scarcely be brought to believe the compositions were those of a female! Her father was commended by Erasmus for making his daughter partake in all the benefits of a learned education.

In later times we have an Elizabeth Carter, and even in our own days, have we not had many who have thrown a radiant halo round the name of woman? a serene and holy Hemans, an enthusiastic and impassioned Landon, and many living stars, differing in degrees of splendour, but all pure, luminous, and *bright*.

I lately met with a work in which the author *laments* (!) that the ancient Egyptians, who were celebrated for their learning, astronomy, and magic, paid some rare though distinguished marks of attention to woman, admitting her to public lectures on philosophy, and sometimes allowing the laurel of science to rest upon her brow; where, through a taste nearly unheard-of in any other country, she was entrusted with the management of political negotiations, and other public undertakings. "The sort of knowledge which these sages communicated," adds my disconsolate author, "*unmade the woman; it raised her understanding on the ruin of her graces!*" An Egyptian lady does not captivate us in recollection, however she

may dazzle and shine on the page of history." So then we may believe after all that woman really has some understanding, and that it is possible to transform her from the thing of softness and animal beauty to something better. If the graces of the mind are more enduring than those of the person, why ought not the greater and the better to assert their just supremacy? But where, we may ask, is the danger of many women becoming so enamoured of science as to forget themselves? In our times such self-oblivion is not to be hoped for, however much it may in a degree be wished.

It would not be desirable to convert the gentler sex into a huge college of professors, but it is to be wished that women would study many things of which they are now as ignorant as infants; so that there might be a thousand sources of pleasure and occupation opened up to them which are now unknown, to fill up those leisure hours which are free from necessary duties. Women cannot always be bringing up children; as the authoress of *Woman's Mission* justly observes, "These children will be men and women some day." And when children have grown up, when they are scattered abroad, perhaps all and every one far from the parental roof, what then does the mother find to do, whose understanding has not been

cultivated? Nothing! she often spends her days in misery, sometimes blaming her children for leaving her, sometimes wishing that her weary hours were numbered, in her dearth of mental occupation. And what is yet worse, from pure idleness and want of knowing how to wile away her time, she may, and sometimes *does*, acquire habits that bedim by degrees the mind with which she may originally have been endowed.

We are aware of the greater longevity of our sex, given doubtless for the time which must be spent in the production and rearing of infants, that they may have no excuse for neglecting those other occupations, which are something nobler than a mere earthly necessity and animal instinct. Of course I do not here allude to the moral and mental training of children, as for that is most requisite the wisdom, of which I fear the majority of mothers are not in possession. It is asserted, women retain not only longer life, but also longer clearness of mind than men; generally speaking, their minds at sixty or seventy years of age being as sound as at half those ages. Many of those women, whose names have just been quoted, lived to a great age, for it is not learning which abridges our years; more lives have been sacrificed at the shrine of fashion and idleness, than ever were slain before that of Minerva.

As a dissuasive argument to deter us from study, we are told that it will mar our beauty, and detract from our *personal* loveliness as women! There can be no doubt that to a certain extent such would be the result; and most devoutly should we pray that every day such results may be on the increase; that women would cease to take delight in being regarded merely as the most beautiful of animals, and would esteem mental or spiritual beauty as a something far beyond this. It may be almost invariably observed that the most intelligent and thoughtful expression of countenance, is not that which is most admired by the other sex, who seem to shrink from the look of an earnest-minded woman, as if she must discover something in them, which they were anxious to conceal. They gladly turn to the more unmeaning beauty of flesh and blood, regarding its possessor much in the same way as they would a fine horse, or a fine pointer. And those of my sex, who are desirous, nay proud of such admiration, must remain in this dormant, this degrading state, if they wish to please them—ONLY; they must pamper the body and leave the mind to perish, increasing, by every possible auxiliary, that species of beauty which is so often destructive to themselves as well as to others.

The style in which some writers have treated

this subject is utterly revolting, and must always be so to every woman who feels that she was made for other purposes, as well as for "the rearing of infants, cooking of meat, and mending of clothes." These things she may do as a temporary occupation; but are these trifles, the very lowest of our wants, to constitute the sum and substance of her whole existence? It seems to be the mode just now to elevate some natural wants into duties and virtues, converting that which was the subject of rebuke by the blessed Saviour, into one continuous occupation. The words of our teacher were, "Be ye not as the Gentiles, saying always, What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" Many seem to consider that there is no possibility of the mind having any wants whatever, so utterly are they absorbed in manufacturing and catering for the perishing body. And woman lends her aid to this demoralization, this animalization, converting what should be no more than a partial employment, into the whole occupation, nay, end of her existence, and aim of her devotion; adorning the body and making it so comfortable, that with assistance of every kind, she contrives to *slumber* her life away.

Will woman not risk the loss of some admiration, provided she may thereby gain in *self-*

respect, and rise, moreover, to a nobler height in the scale of creation? The most beautiful and luxuriant flower must fade some day, however carefully treated and watched, and so must the beauty of clay; but not the beauty of intelligence, for the more the latter is expanded and developed, the richer become its perfumes, the more exquisite its colours; and these never lose their freshness; year after year only adds to their strength and endurance. For this kind of loveliness will she not barter a few of her vanities and luxuries—even should wrinkles grace her brow, and a few gray hairs appear amidst the black and shining tresses? Such are sure to come; therefore we should endeavour to have something in store, by way of compensation for them, since a vapid old age never reconciles the beauty to the loss of her youthful charms.

The pursuit of some particular branch of science, or the study of general literature, does not necessarily make us ugly, as some selfishly sapient persons of the other sex wish us to believe, any more than it shortens existence, for many talented women have lived long. At this moment it so happens that several women of eminent endowments do not rank among the ugly, but among the fair, and, moreover, we are

aware how often stupidity and want of personal attraction go together. Notwithstanding these facts, a certain would-be philosopher asserts, that all the women who were famed for learning, were "frightfully ugly!" The truth is, I suppose, that this philosopher has found so many women so much wiser than himself, that in mortal hatred and jealousy, he wages deadly war against all who would venture to pluck a few leaves from the tree of knowledge. But let not woman be afraid, for if that wondrous tree have no better guardians, it will be no difficult matter to push them aside. A witty authoress says, "When men eat of the tree of knowledge, women are sure to come in for a taste." But as some of us (at least) are not content to live on the broken fragments now and then thrown to us, let us try if we cannot obtain some of the fruit itself; we certainly taste much of the evils of life, why should we not likewise partake of its blessings?

CHAPTER VI.

LOVE—FRIENDSHIP.

Two clouds before the Summer gale
 In equal race fleet o'er the sky,
 Two flowers when wintry blasts assail,
 Together pine, together die.

But two capricious human hearts,
 No sage's rod may track their ways,
 No eye pursue their lawless starts
 Along their wild self-chosen maze.

Christian Year.—KEBLE.

It would be against established rule to write upon women, and say nothing of love and friendship; of the former of which it is said they are so very susceptible, and of the latter of which it is as commonly said they are utterly incapable.

We may ask, first of all, whether that oracle, *on dit*, which in this country so arbitrarily settles all disputes, ruling at once despotically and ridiculously, *be in the right*, when it proclaims that woman is incapable of friendship in the highest sense of the word; and secondly, we may ask what sort of love it is that she often *does* feel; whether it be not a secondary and a blind

impulse, not worth the waste of ink to chronicle its existence.

Love, or the capability of feeling it, in its highest and most spiritual aspect, is the most precious gift bestowed upon mortals, the most penetrating and exalting of emotions known to man. That being, consequently, cannot be considered to be deprived of enjoyment or happiness, who retains this inexhaustible fountain of joy; the more we are filled with this generous sentiment, the happier we are. But as this is not what is commonly understood by the word love, let us see what is to be made of that, of which poets rave, and women dream. We are aware that the cause of transient delight ends too often in the permanent essence of misery, and that this species of feeling is a mere *ignis fatuus*, leading often into all kinds of bogs and morasses, though at the same time a something so beautiful, that in gazing upon it, the gazer seems to lose his senses, or appears as if he had drunk of some enchanted wine, which had the effect of lifting him above the sordid cares of a prosaic world. In common minds the feeling is weak and languid; rather a gentle and soft sensation, than anything else, easily excited, and as easily forgotten. But this is not the case with strong organizations, where it becomes deep and impassioned,

and should circumstances be such as to require its annihilation, the struggle is sometimes a matter of life and death, so powerful is this master-passion of the heart. Such persons as those last described should dread the approach of what may involve them in anguish as great, as the joy seemed unspeakable of which they dreamt, and in which, perhaps, they had placed all their hopes of earthly happiness.

Happiness springing from such a source is a mere delusion, for so strong a feeling cannot endure under any circumstances; the violence of its nature precludes its continuation, and all who place their expectations of happiness on such a fleeting emotion, must taste the bitterness of disappointment. Such is not the design of these emotions, they are but parts of existence, and given for specific purposes, but not for us to live upon; they are too exciting and all-absorbing, and should be but sparingly indulged in. An universal love of humanity is proper, and ought to be encouraged, but love to single individuals, on the contrary, should be moderated; for when intense, it causes a thousand inquietudes, and not unfrequently is injurious, in place of being beneficial, to the object upon which it is bestowed, becoming at the same time wearisome and fatiguing; for if the object so loved does not respond to the feeling

with a like intensity, how can it be otherwise? Men have many things wherewith to occupy themselves besides the tender passion, and why woman should be ever told that she has nothing else, we may well ask. Trained up as if for love alone, her heart is but too often apt to bestow itself upon the first person who chances to cross her path, and with what result? Loving her suitor before she knows anything of his character, which may be one, perhaps, calculated only to make her unhappy, she rushes blindly into the vortex of matrimony, and only afterwards opening her eyes, beholds in it a prospect of perpetual suffering! Then, instead of blaming herself or her instructors, she not unfrequently torments her partner, intimating in words neither soft or low, that he intentionally deceived her; whereas, she not only deceived herself, but in this case perchance the honest man also, who, seeing her only under the influence of love, either real or fancied, had before his eyes the image of gentleness, guilelessness, loveliness and smiles. For what man does not think his lady-love both amiable and beautiful? And now his wonder is, how he could have been so infatuated as to imagine cold gray eyes, soft, and expressive of gentleness, or a mouth, not exactly "like two cherries, seeming parted," the personification of kindness and mirthfulness. But

he speedily consoles himself for his stupidity, as he has many other resources ; while, alas ! for the lady, whose sweet stream of existence has now become turbid and tasteless, her sorrow is not easily forgotten, and destitute of all materials, save those of which “ castles in the air ” are built, how from such nothingness can she rear a substantial edifice in which to dwell ? Told from childhood that she must love in order to find happiness, she is perplexed when it turns out that having done so, she experiences just the reverse. Such mutual disappointment, of daily occurrence, even where the parties were said to have been desperately in love, and where, perhaps, the hundred obstacles have been overcome which opposed their union, might serve as beacons to others. But, as was observed before, we are obstinately only to be taught by individual experience, and though ninety-nine should suffer shipwreck, we always make certain of an escape until we ourselves are in the midst of the breakers.

Are we, then, to infer that those who are in love are fools ? that love is a mere delusion, that men as well as women (or should I say women as well as men) are fickle and capricious ? or what ? None of these inferences are perfectly just ; the error lies in false ideas of the nature of love, taking that for a substance which is only a shadow ; a lovely one,

it is true, but nevertheless only a fleeting cloud, fringed with golden light, a veil [so very bright that the sun seems to linger behind it ere he sinks to rest. To tell woman that she must not only try to catch this fleeting ray, but also to live upon it, is an evil, productive of unceasing misery. Love, for the time of its existence, is deaf to reason, therefore the voice of warning is unheeded by it; if we venture to speak of prudence to any one under the mysterious influence, we are considered as if made of ice, or no better than cold-blooded animals, fit only to live in the sea, in whose depths she is apt to wish us sunk, rather than to be lecturing her.

To tell woman not to love, would be an absurdity; we might as well tell her neither to move, eat, or speak; but it seems even a greater absurdity to impress her with the idea, that to love comprises her whole destiny, the sole purpose of her creation, to fulfil which she must first find a lover, and then convert him into a husband. Thus having no other end in existence, she must think her task completed, when she steps from the home of her childhood into the house of her companion for life; when the real fact is, that she has descended from the region of dreams to that of stern realities, often as unfit for the duties she has to perform, as a man would be to teach Arabic,

who knew not a letter of its alphabet, or the sound of its simplest word.

Is it any marvel that reared up in such ideas, woman often imagines herself to be in love, when she is not? It is not; but it is perhaps so far fortunate in some cases that she thinks so, since it enables her to enter into the most serious of all engagements, with an appearance of propriety; for where can we find a more revolting spectacle, than where a woman places herself in the hands of a man, for whom she has not one spark of affection? Better far for the honour and purity of the sex, that she should find out afterwards that her love was an imaginary one, than that with coldness and calculation she had profaned the altar of Hymen, by selling herself to the highest bidder there—not for months or for years, but for a whole lifetime! Yet such scenes, revolting to every pure mind, are daily witnessed in this country.

Love, evanescent and transient though it be, is far too refined an essence to be bought with gold, and it is a soothing thought that there yet remain to us a few things beyond the reach of the yellow monster, he who walks so insolently over the land, demanding and receiving the most hideous sacrifices! We read of ancient Molochs, but none of them surpassed our modern idol, at whose fearful

shrine, parents without a tear, without a pang, offer up the young, the fair, and the innocent; often slowly and silently to expire, or, what is worse, to become artful, selfish, cold-hearted, and worldly in the worst sense of the word.

To love is *right*, for there is no feeling given to us, which is not meant to be developed, in some form or other; but in the life of woman as well as in that of man, it is meant only to be an incident; a cause leading to effect; not a dream, in the dreaming of which we are to pass our entire existence. Further, if our mental powers were exercised so as to keep pace with our affections, we should run less danger of falling in love with characters or dispositions unsuitable to our own; since it is not likely we would then choose admirers from among those whose society we could scarcely tolerate, even for an hour, no matter how rich the subjects might be. As love at first sight happens very rarely, if we were sufficiently acquainted with ourselves, and were our judgments so formed as to enable us to judge maturely and correctly of the qualifications of others; like skilful alchemists we should then better know what elements would fuse harmoniously, and what others would repel and separate from each other; our reason would tell us very plainly to shun the latter, and to admit into our intimate circle

only those harmonious and blending ingredients, from the admixture of which there was no risk of explosion. It were heartily to be wished that such mental chemistry were more fashionable, that as much pains were taken to analyse the properties of mind, as those of matter, for our mistakes would thereby be diminished, and our happiness promoted. At present our ignorance, so blind and so deaf, is the unceasing cause of discomfort and confusion.

Will those persons who have the most carefully studied each other, make the best or the worst companions? Surely the former, for there will then be no more faults to find out, no more lurking weaknesses to be known. The German was right who said, "If your friend is not worth loving and valuing with all his faults and weaknesses, he is not worth having." But woman rarely admits that her lover has any faults, and when afterwards this truth is painfully forced upon her, the blame is always laid upon the wrong person, and instead of a soothing system being adopted, or a *juste-milieu* found, a magnifying glass is unconsciously resorted to, which of course increases the evil.

If it indeed be the nature and destiny of woman to lavish so much of the tender sentiment, why is it necessary so constantly to preach this up to her? Nature does not leave such things to chance,

but asserts her authority in spite of all artificial barriers; therefore nature in this case ought to be left to work out her own law, and we ought not to nourish in woman what is decidedly, in excess, a sickly, a diseased sentiment.

The love of which I now speak is no absolute necessity, for many have lived and died with no other knowledge of the feeling than they have gathered from the songs of poets, or writers of romance; and yet these persons have had warm hearts, and done much for the happiness of others; they have been the friends and comforters of the desolate, have wiped away the tears of the mourner, and have felt the calmest of joys upon which they could reflect without a drawback. A generous sympathy with all our fellow beings is worth a thousand ordinary individual attachments, even could we have as many; but we can only love once, in the real sense of the word, that is, with the entire energy of our mind and the strength of our soul, intensely, profoundly, and wholly. And in this concentration and depth of feeling, there is a sublimity and elevation, which makes the person under its mighty influence capable of the most extraordinary exertions and the most exalted thoughts. Few, however, can either inspire or feel such profound passion as this; it belongs to the enthusiastic, poetical, and thoughtful charac-

ter, not to those who skim along the surface of society, and are contented there. But in this rarefied atmosphere of feeling, the mortal cannot long exist; the spirit must either rend its earthly garments, and be freed from all encumbrance, or like the traveller, descend from the dazzling snow-white pinnacle, the killing ideal Mont Blanc, and be satisfied, like others, to tread in the valley of every-day life.

Since it is for the ordinary occurrences of existence that we ought to be educated, and not for such as rarely happens, the feelings (I speak not at present of pursuits) which best conduce to our welfare are those of a tranquil and steady nature, which should be within control, and ready at a moment's notice to perform their part; whether in soothing words to calm the excited, in those of encouragement to inspirit the timid, in tones of kindness to cheer the unhappy, or it may be, in the language of rebuke to check the thoughtless and giddy. We may find in the events of a single day, many channels in which our feelings may flow and with propriety, without the need of this especial one which is called love, and which, as I have before remarked, brings to its possessor too often rather a permanence of sorrow and grief than of delight and happiness.

We hear for ever of the self-devotion of our

sex. In nine cases out of ten such a feeling would be more aptly named by the designation of self-abasement or self-annihilation; since the thing so much lauded is neither more or less than the act of the devoted one losing her self-identity in that of a being composed of no better materials than herself; whose will, no matter what! becomes her law, through which all-absorbing mist, she seems unable to judge whether the will to be obeyed tends to good or evil, and which confusion often continues until she becomes so weak and helpless, that if positive sin and absolute degradation be demanded, it is conceded! The consequence of course being, that in losing herself she loses her self-respect, and becomes the veriest slave of another, whose selfish wishes she fulfils *au pied de la lettre*; whose every whim and caprice she pampers to their fullest extent, and in some instances whose evil passions she helps to run riot, because "he is far too much loved to be contradicted." Such is woman's devotion! lowering her own character and demoralizing that of another! Let her, therefore, instead of this, endeavour to be devoted to the cause of truth and virtue, let her beware of becoming an idolator, placing in the shrine which should be reserved for all things great, some mere idol of clay. The greatest love is shown not in yielding to weak,

foolish, or unjust demands, *but in resolutely opposing them*, as it is invariably the weaker part of us which yields, and it is ever easier to please those we love than to incur their anger. But in the face of this let us remember that the anger of a moment, nay its rage or fury, may be productive of better results than a thousand concessions might have succeeded in effecting; and, that woman is the most faithful wife or mistress, who seeks to elevate and ennoble the mind of her husband or lover, though he may not in his momentary blindness think so. A certain writer says, "That men must either be treated like children or wild beasts." Perhaps some may deem this satire too severe, but from the way in which they are coaxed to do what is right, we may fairly presume that the first part of this remark at least is true. I never see a woman flattering the other sex, or addressing them with honied words, without thinking of a child receiving sugar plumbs, in order to induce it to be polite, or to perform some specific task, to be, in short, "a good boy." It is a hazardous affair the taming of wild animals, so I am not surprised that the gentler idea of childhood is adopted in preference.

Why the urchin of the bow should take precedence of the god of friendship cannot well be

imagined, unless it be supposed that the latter ought ever to be at the heels of the former to pick up stray arrows, and perform sundry kind offices for the sportive child, who certainly needs some such grave attendant to take care of him, but for which serious personage, we are told, woman has an *instinctive aversion!* so much so that she never entertains him at all, lavishing her entire attention upon the rosy, bright-eyed son of beauty, who in return for her overpowering courtesies plays her a thousand tricks, while he tells her that she is on the high road to elysium!

How has the idea originated that woman is incapable of friendship; incapable of that which embodies all of noble, of generous sentiment to be found on earth? The sacred name of friend conveys in its very sound that pleasure to the heart which is the incarnation of all that we may hope to possess, of whatever is best in this dawn of our existence. It is a mystery! for according to received opinion, her heart overflows with sympathy, her affections are warm and strong, her attachment and devotion indestructible, her morality high and pure; and yet, with all these, she is said to want the capability of forming a sincere, ardent, and heroic friendship.

Does such an anomaly really exist? *Assuredly it does not.* Let woman, therefore, free herself

from this sad allegation, for in it is conveyed the imputation of selfishness, want of generosity, meanness, and littleness of mind; in short, the slander comprehends all that is contemptible. We are told that we can love, because to love is an instinct, but to be a friend is beyond our reach, as, for the formation of friendship, all the higher sentiments are required, and of these it would appear we are considered destitute! The instant we cease to be pleased, like children, we destroy our toys, or throw them from us; we have no patience, no endurance, in fact no anything which would enable us to withstand the varied trials to which friendship is subjected. Most urgently, then, would I beg of woman to refute the often repeated calumny that she is incapable of friendship.

If her past history proves more of devotion to the lover, than of faith to the friend, let her endeavour to become for the future a degree less ardent in love, that she may cultivate the faculties which are needful in friendship, as for it she is just as much fitted as man,—by nature. Where among men do we hear of Jonathans and Davids, of Damons and Pythiases? so scarce are real friends, that they are looked upon as phenomena, and those who possess such an invaluable treasure, may reckon themselves among the favoured

ones of the earth. Let it not be forgotten, that as far as capability is concerned, for being all which human beings can be, I place woman and man on the same footing; though I cannot observe that the moral feelings or tender sentiments predominate in the one sex more than in the other. For so incalculable are the results of training, that very training which, from the cradle to the grave, is so different in regard to the sexes, that we might from thence imagine that man and woman were destined in futurity for two different worlds.

Why do women not take an interest in other women? why are they not the friends of their own sex? are for ever the contemptuous questions asked of us. Why does woman not support and defend those who need succour and sympathy, why does she turn away from the suffering and the unfortunate as if she had nothing in common with them? Why does she not kindle at the elevation of those of her own sex, and delight in their society, as men do in that of each other? On the contrary, it is proverbial that women find peculiar pleasure in annoying each other, or indeed in doing worse than this. We look in vain from her for that sympathetic chain, which ought to link in one common interest the whole human family. It were much to be desired that we could see woman

the friend of woman, and to perceive that the sacred duties of friendship were held in more reverence by her.

It is difficult, in the present degraded state of society, to speak of friendship between persons of opposite sexes; to so low an ebb have matters come, that they can scarcely be on terms of acquaintanceship apart from the tie of matrimony, or bond of relationship. Women are so schooled about catching husbands, that the simplest species of civility from a man is converted into "particular attention," just as might be expected from those, who ever on the watch, are sure to pick up something or other which they can put to use. Thus men are terrified from the presence and society of women, by the vision of an action for "breach of promise," or there rises before them the startling question of some prudent parent, or brother, as to *intentions*, keeping them in a perpetual trepidation, rendering the intercourse between the sexes of the most restrained, artificial, and embarrassing description. This is much to be deplored, for how can young persons ever be the better of each other's society, when such a formidable barrier is raised against it? It cannot be doubted that this almost compulsory banishment of young men from the refining society of young women, is the cause of the demo-

ralization of many of the former, since, when we are deprived of innocent and legitimate enjoyment, we are prone to seek it from sources more questionable. Many young men who have been accustomed to the society of sisters, when compelled to live at a distance from their family, perhaps in cheerless, comfortless lodgings, would most gladly cultivate an acquaintance with those of the other sex, without any thoughts of love being in their heads, were they only permitted to do so. But this is rendered next to impossible by the present artificial usages of civilized life. The more amalgamated that the male and female characters become, the more advantageous would it be for both parties; and such can be effected only through more frequent and more rational intercourse.

Young persons, nay persons from twenty to seventy (so ridiculous have we become,) cannot meet a few times, without some love affair being gossiped about, given out as a hint, that if they are not in love they ought to be so, or else it is very imprudent, and such other absurdity; until it has become absolutely dangerous for a Victoria shawl to say, "How d'ye do?" to an Albert sur-tout. Were women to earn their own livelihood, or succeeded to an equal inheritance of property with men, we should hear less assuredly about

falling in love from them, and on the other hand were men somewhat occupied with higher ideas, as well as with business, less' of it even from them. The necessity for women working for themselves is now, however, becoming glaringly apparent.

As a sample of the morals and manners of the refined nineteenth century,—the model for future ages!—we behold young ladies so susceptible that they fall in love at a mile's distance, and young gentlemen so terrified thereat, that they very prudently keep out of the way, since marriage is becoming every day an affair more and more seriously expensive; in fact, scarcely to be entered upon in these bad times. It will be a day of regeneration when man and woman can meet, without their brains being full of imaginary phantoms; when it will be found *possible* to converse about other things than love, and when a woman may befriend a man, or a man a woman, without reference to what a witty authoress calls the “zoölogical distinction.”

I am not so foolish as to assert, that the fears of the young man, or old man, (for it is all one, so that he be but a man,) are needless. .So far from this, we must be aware that unsuspecting youths, as well as sagacious old bachelors, are drawn into engagements, and even marriage, ere

they know what they are doing, so great is the demand for husbands. Still I must exonerate those who are oftener dupes and victims to their elders, than projectors of such schemes themselves; I mean the young girls, who would associate with their young male companions, without much risk of falling in love, were they only left to themselves. For surely it is not meant to be asserted in earnest, that we are ready, or that it is our nature, to fall in love with any man and every man whom chance may throw in our way, though such a belief is acted upon, (like many other absurdities) helped not a little, I must say, by the vanity of young men, who *as men* deem themselves irresistible. Whereas, were nature permitted to speak, and not artifice, the matter would wear a different aspect, and the pretensions of vanity and the delusions of imagination be laid low enough.

As for the ladies who have passed the season of inexperience, their conduct is unpardonable, unless it is to be exonerated on this score, that should they not exert themselves to obtain a husband, how is it possible for them to fulfil their destiny! that destiny so vehemently insisted upon. In this view of the subject, ought we not rather to commend their increasing exertions? whether it be to seize hold of young or old, rich or poor,

ugly or handsome, wise men or fools, maintaining the opinion of the wife, who, being asked by an old maid how she could possibly take so bad a husband, retorted, "that at least, he was better than no husband at all!"

This logic seems of a most convincing kind, and difficult to be overturned in the minds of those who are taught to believe, that their sole business in life is to be married; I can therefore only conjecture, that as love is more extolled than friendship, through an admiration of its brightness, the more enduring loveliness of the nobler feeling is overlooked.

CHAPTER VII.

OLD MAIDISM! .


Nobody coming to marry me,
 Nobody coming to woo,
 Nobody coming to marry me,
 Oh ! dear, what *shall* I do !—*Old Song.*

Do ! Why you can do nothing but remain an old maid, so there is an end of the matter ; for however right it may be accounted to sigh and look “unutterable things,” to hint at the dreariness of a garret, or speak of the blessedness of matrimony, remember that to go and look at a man straight in the face, and with a coaxing tone request him to have the goodness to marry you, would be the most dreadful outrage, the most deadly offence you could commit against propriety and feminine delicacy. You may *insinuate* what you want, but beware of plain speaking ! Therefore, if you have danced and sung in vain, hinted and smiled to no purpose, you are a lost woman ; your case is hopeless beyond remedy, and all that can be done is to enable you to bear your

misfortune with a becoming moderation of grief, and to offer a few words of consolation on the melancholy and distressing event.

Oh! for the days of Lactantius or Hildebrand! how sadly has the world degenerated! We now exalt and magnify what was once barely tolerated, and the bright stars, called the companions of saints and angels, too pure almost to touch the sinful earth, those shining lights whose radiance dazzled the very eyes of the beholders, are now thrust out of sight, put aside like rubbish into a lumber-room, and contemptuously called "Old Maids!"

But this state of degeneracy cannot last long, we shall have a counter-movement some of these days, for as the newly-launched ship reels first to one side and then to another, before it is able to balance itself aright upon the watery element, so does the human mind act in its search after truth, rushing impetuously towards a given point, which having reached, but not found what it sought, eagerly retraces its steps, pausing not to breathe, till it attains the very opposite of its earlier wished-for resting-place. When we go too far the one way, there is a moral certainty that, in the effort to gain an equilibrium, we are sure to go as far the other way, reaction following action in everything. So has it been with regard to



marriage and single life. What ranked formerly as one of the highest virtues, for two or three centuries back has been treated almost as a crime, wrested from its proud pedestal, and trampled under foot. Instead of receiving the homage of the multitude, it has been held up to the scorn and ridicule of the ignorant, the morally and mentally debased. But now, when from various causes, this is felt to be likewise an error, it is to be hoped that the decriers of single life will rock themselves into a safe position, only to be found in an avoidance of extremes; these dangerous rocks, against which every now and then the human mind dashes itself.

That some women remain unmarried from choice, there can be no doubt; and there would be many more, it may be believed with equal certainty, who would do so, were it not from the opprobrium which is generally attached to the name of old maid, from childhood held up before our eyes as a bugbear, perpetually reminding us that marriage is not only admirable and excellent, but *indispensable*; and, on the other hand, single life abominable, hideous; a very violation of the commands of God! Many, not having sufficient stamina to endure the reproach, rush blindly into matrimony, who would have been a thousand times better off had they remained single,

their characters quite unfitting them to fill such a situation, either with comfort to themselves or others, while, as is ever the case, one error leading to another, each succeeding one becomes worse than its predecessor. The cases of those who remain unmarried from choice, and of those who do so *against* their will and inclination, are indeed totally different; the former being satisfied and at ease, while the latter acquire the discontented look, the index of that discontent which is falsely said to be peculiar to the whole spinster sisterhood.

For it is unquestionable, that nowhere can we meet with more kind-hearted, happier, and more *intelligently* contented women, than among those who from different motives have *chosen* to remain single, instead of encountering the arduous task, the unceasing toil and anxiety, which attend the votaries of Hymen.

I suppose a possibility exists of women making choice of single life, without thinking it needful to seek the retirement of the cloister, or becoming the selfish, complaining, tiresome being, which is meant to be understood by the term "old maid." Among those whose dispositions would have led them to marry, had circumstances permitted, we may wonder that pride or vanity, (if no nobler feeling,) does not enable them to rise superior to

the vulgar prejudice, for surely it is nobler to be looked upon as able to stand upon our own feet, and manage our own affairs, than to be so completely merged in the existence of another, that the law takes no cognizance of us. The unmarried woman is *somebody*; the married, *nobody*! The former shines in her own light; the latter is only the faint reflection of her husband's, in whom both law and public opinion suppose her "to be lost." She can have no will in her half-sort of existence, is utterly without power, a mere derivative, scarcely held responsible for her own actions! Surely the state of the much-ridiculed spinster is better than this very equivocal position, in which there is a great risk of losing our very identity, as indeed appears sometimes to happen. Such a reflection as this might console the most inconsolable, even were such spared the annihilation from accident, and not choice. We ought not to forget either that, squalling children often become, in due time, insolent young men, and pert young women, annoying and teasing their parents to death; for all the world knows, that however smiling and beautiful the young cherubs may seem in their cradles, the hearts of not a few parents have been broken by the conduct of their offspring, though unceasing care was bestowed upon their education.

Nothing is more ridiculous and unjust than the marked difference which is made between the married and unmarried woman; in consequence of which, we often see some conceited young girl, dressed in all the exuberance of bad taste, and chattering like a magpie, take the precedence of an older and wiser person, for no other reason than because she has happened to find some one to dress her, and keep her, and call her wife. We may well blush for the ignorance and absurdity which permit such things to be; when shall we become reasonable; when will realities be sought for in order to be valued, instead of all kinds of folly being encouraged? Why are people not respected for what they are as human beings, rather than flattered and caressed for their trappings, or the names they happen to bear? There is no disgrace in being a bachelor; then why should there be such attached to the feminine gender of the same class? How long will woman suffer these incongruities to exist, in matters where *it is said* she has the power to rectify the abuse?

If she would only regard herself from the proper *point de vue*, such absurdities would be forced to make their exit, and there would be no more laughing at old maids, any more than at old grandmamas, unless they wished to pass off as

“youthful belles!” when assuredly they deserve to be laughed at, and in no wise tolerated. This fantastic idea of wishing to look young, when the face is covered with wrinkles, cannot soon enough be driven away; it is a pitiable weakness! Yet from whence does it proceed? From the same prolific source of evil from whence so much comes, which debases woman, viz., from the knowledge that it is their persons, and not their minds, which please the opposite sex! Further, as they have been brought up for that purpose, and no other, having no other aim in life than to be married, how is it possible, that even in old age, the habits acquired during a lifetime, can be abandoned? It would be almost as easy to make the leopard change his spots. It is not when we are old that we can change our modes of thinking and acting, hence the necessity of storing up when young, those materials which will solace us, when youth, beauty, and elasticity of mind have departed.

As marriage is the general rule, why are the few who make the exceptions, not entitled to as much respect as is shown to those who have preferred another path, since no one can deny that each has a right to please herself in such things as do not interfere with the happiness of others. Why should a married woman think

she has a right to sneer at her who happens not to be blest with a husband? and it is further to be observed, that those married women who are unhappy in their own condition, are generally those who are most bitter in their invectives against the venerable sisterhood! as if, at heart, they grudged them the peace and contentment they seemed to enjoy. There is a perversity in human nature, frequently shewn in wishing other people to be as unhappy, or, perhaps, even more unhappy than ourselves; our weight of misfortune seems to become lighter, in proportion as we have fellow-sufferers and companions to share it. Whereas, if we viewed this aright, the greater the number of the miserable, ought to add the more to our sorrow, rather than its decrease. Alas! for the selfishness of humanity, which, not content to suffer alone, seeks for companions even in misery.

It is often argued as a reason against single life, that its victims are very desolate and lonely, in fact very miserable; but does it inevitably follow that because we do not choose to involve ourselves in the anxieties of a family we are therefore bound to live alone, desolate and cheerless? By no means; we may surround ourselves with a thousand objects, from whence pure, tranquil, and exalted pleasure may be derived. We can have

the society of those we esteem, we may have sisters, brothers, or dear friends, upon whom may be bestowed the warmest affection; if fond of children, we may meet with but too many to care for, who are roaming the streets in a condition not much above that of the animals, a disgrace and a stain to the country which gives them birth. Not that the children are to be blamed; with nothing before their eyes but vice, through an utter neglect of all education, an ignorance of all morality, through the example of parents sunk in poverty and wretchedness, how can they be otherwise than what they are?

Again, if the tastes of the votaries of single life are elegant and refined, the works of art can afford them unceasing enjoyment, or, they may devote a portion of their time to artistic or scientific labours, and there is no want of books. Then there are the magnificent wonders of Creation to be seen, to be studied, and admired; from the mighty mountain crowned with eternal snows, down to the delicate heather-bell which blooms beneath our feet. Who that has a soul ought to feel alone in the midst of a world, sinful though its inhabitants are, so full of variety, of wonder, and of beauty?

If nature in her purity and splendour was more known and prized, we should not so often hear of

rational beings complaining of dulness and ennui. Where is the wisdom of attaching so much importance to one position or another, when in a few years we shall be removed from this first stage of our life, where alone such relationship as that of marriage can exist, which is useful and beneficial as an institution suited only to the wants of humanity? We read that in heaven there will be "neither marrying nor giving in marriage," yet from the practice and speaking of many women we are led to suppose that they will be rather drearily situated, in a world where they will find no husbands.

We decidedly ought not to elevate earthly things to the rank of heavenly ones, or give one accident of life an undue importance over another. Everything is well in its own place, but removed from that, the best may be abused, and a beauty may be converted into a deformity. Marriage is honourable when entered into with affection and reason; but will any one say that the mercenary, selfish, worldly motives which at present lead so many to contract the alliance, are either right or honourable? Are they not bringing the rite into contempt, and most shamefully outraging and insulting nature! We cannot with impunity break through the laws of God, and this is clearly proved here, by the misery and wretchedness

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which these base gain-makers too often bring upon themselves and their children.

A certain distinguished religious polemic of the present day has taken alarm, lest the doctrine of celibacy should once more be recommended from the sacerdotal chair; dreading the effect of such teaching upon young poetic and refined minds, so apt to seize upon and adopt any idea that savours more of spirit than of matter, before the judgment has had time to prove or even to perceive the insane tendency of such unwholesome teaching. I have used the word insane, as it is a very favourite one with the learned author, when treating of this subject; he has come moreover to the conclusion, (in spite of all the eloquence of our Christian Cicero,) that the doctrine of celibacy has only emanated from crazed Troglodytes, and fanatics who had imbibed the flimsy notion of ascetic sanctity, which, arising from the gnostic notion of the Divine nature, gave origin to the idea of asceticism, and in particular to the doctrine of the angelic excellence of virginity. The alarm of this eminent author may or may not be well founded; it is not for me to sound the depths and scale the heights of such profound disquisitions, as whether the voluntary celibacy of one in many hundreds is an affair of such consequence to morality! I only humbly hint, that respect at least for those who

choose in this matter to walk in the footsteps of the saints of other times, (mad though it may now be the fashion to call them), would not be amiss; more especially since numbers at present seem compelled by dire necessity to follow the example of those white-robed votaries of celibacy, though at an immeasurable distance, seeing that it is against their will!

We Christians of this enlightened age are worse than were the Gentiles, who hesitated not to dedicate a grove or a shrine to the goddess of the crescent and the bow; neither do we read that the priestesses or vestals who guarded the sacred fire were despised or scorned. They seem rather to have been held in a degree of estimation quite unknown to their modern sisters. It may be asserted, however, that there is little fear of many following the advice of Lactantius, Athanasius, or any of those fathers, whose minds, according to modern notions, had a few cracks and rents in them. When we hear of nothing but the craziness, absurdity, and sinfulness! of all such opinions; when the halo has been removed, which once shone so radiantly around the heads of the Saint Therasas, Saint Catherines, and Saint Ursulas, of former times, and has instead been placed upon the brows of those, who have had the felicity of finding a mortal spouse, it is not to be wondered

at that Diana, as well as those other ladies, are utterly scorned,—their followers contemned. If the married secretly thought that at a former period they were rather equivocally treated; assuredly they have now no reason to complain; they get much sympathy, and they have had their day of retaliation, but seem now to rejoice rather too much in the triumphs they have gained over the aspirants to seraphic innocence!

We need not be so much concerned, however, about the few who, even in these material days, show a fondness for the dwellers in caves, dreaming enthusiasts, and eastern mystics; their ideality, ethereality, and spirituality, so perfectly uphold and sustain them, that they require nothing, and want nothing, which any of their more heavily-laden companions, those who, less aspiring, are struggling on in this nether world, might feel inclined to offer. But these are the few, and it is not they who require to be spoken of, or spoken to; I must occupy myself with the rule, and not its exceptions, and moreover I happen to be as little of a Catholic to laud virginity, as a Jewess to exult in a multitudinous offspring.

A few remarks more, and I shall have done with "Old Maidism," that state in which not a few Englishwomen live, and in harmony too with their own wishes! Why so many unmarried wo-

men are unhappy, is *not* because they are old maids, but in consequence of *poverty*, and of the difficulty they encounter in maintaining a decent position in society, which we know in this country depends upon the value of our property, not upon our mental endowments and moral worth. It is the want often of the common comforts of life, which, gives to so many unmarried women that anxious look of care and grief which is seen in the expression of their countenances. This is the evil which distresses and undermines their existence.

It is useless any longer to question the propriety of occupation for women, the matter has now become serious; occupying the thoughts of the philanthropist, and demanding the attention even of the legislator. Were this great evil amended, what a vast amount of sin and sorrow might be spared to many a woman; it is want of employment, and want of means, which make women contract unfit alliances, which make hundreds vicious in every sense of the word, and which slowly and lingeringly starve many to death! Those whose minds revolt from moral degradation, however specious and beautiful may be the veil in which the vice strives to hide itself, require perhaps less compassion, for they have a pure conscience, though their bodies may be emaciated

and broken down; their minds enable them to *endure* at least those fearful evils, which they have neither the means of averting or removing. And yet, these are the persons against whom the heartless world aims its most envenomed shafts, and against whom are directed the most cutting satires of the worldling, the fool, the sensualist!

CHAPTER VIII.

MARRIAGE.

Marriage will never be held sacred, till women by being brought up with men, are prepared to be their companions, rather than their mistresses.

I now come to the grand centre round which woman is expected to revolve and re-revolve,—towards which she is supposed to be attracted from the moment she is conscious of her distinctive appellation as opposed to that of man.

For what purpose marriage was originally instituted, we all know,—or at least ought to know; in its primitive purity, as meant by the Creator, it was to unite two persons who through affection were willing to be the friends and supporters of each other in their toilsome journey through life; equally caring for and educating the other human beings, the result of such an union, and thus meant as a benefit and a blessing to mankind. One woman was to have one husband, and one husband to have one wife; this was the simple commandment; how it has been kept let history tell! how it is now abused and perverted from

its original purpose is easily shown; though not for the pleasure of declamation or fault-finding. It is to be hoped that some may be induced to consider this matter in the serious light it demands, far different from the carelessness which at present prevails with regard to it, when our whole anxiety is, not whether the minds of the parties are fitted to dwell harmoniously in such near neighbourhood, but whether the bride be young and handsome, the bridegroom rich and fashionable. Or sometimes, when, against all common sense, and setting at defiance every natural law, we find a rich old lady bargaining for a good-looking but poor young man; what sort of marriages *all* such are, is generally pretty plainly proved in the sequel. In the first case, the young man tires of his pretty wife, when he finds out that her personal attractions are the whole of her dowry;—I do not mean in regard to money, (he being rich) but in regard of every qualification which it is needful for those to possess, who enter into such a temper-trying and mind-testing connexion, called the “discipline of humanity,” a discipline certainly in some instances, to which that of St. Francis is a jest! As for our foolish fond old dame, her wealth gives her unprincipled partner the means of providing himself with more fascinating companions, in whose society he

has not much difficulty in forgetting his wrinkled patroness.

In France, the marriages *de convenance* are now beginning to be deprecated as subversive of pure feeling, and detrimental to morality, and some writers there have taken up the question. The system of disposing of the persons of young girls, without they themselves having anything to say in the matter, cannot be too warmly contended against. It is a barbarous, a savage custom, but what better in many instances, is marriage in England? Is it not, too generally, a mere matter of convenience or expediency, in which the adaptation of the two natures, either mentally or physically, is utterly lost sight of, and the high moral purposes for which marriage was intended left entirely out of the question?

Woman not being permitted by our present social arrangements and conventional rules, to procure a livelihood through her own exertions, *is compelled* to unite herself with some one who can provide for her; therefore in contracting matrimony she thinks principally of this necessary requisite. I fear I annoy the vanity of man in saying this, but I cannot help it, for it is the truth. Man, on the other hand, being educated to regard woman as a something made merely for his benefit, with which he can do as he pleases,

amusing himself with the toy the one moment, and neglecting it, if he chooses, the next, seeks to find in his wife, a sort of upper servant, or female valet, who is to wait upon him, attend to his wants, instinctively anticipate his wishes, and study his comfort, and who is to live for the sole purpose of seeing him well-fed, well-lodged, and well-pleased! Companionship, friendship, neither of them bargain for. As long as the female looks pretty, dresses well, and waits assiduously upon her liege lord, he is polite and attentive enough; but if from the multiplicity of her cares and petty annoyances, she smiles less frequently, and finds little time to adorn herself—except on state occasions, then the manner begins to change somewhat on the part of the once devoted admirer. He wonders how she manages so badly, is amazed at her want of equability, and declares that she often looks very like the opposite of what he always expects *his* wife to appear. On the other hand, the lady meeting with no participation in her cares, but rather a perpetual fault-finding, and blame-giving, for things she cannot help, begins to think she may have purchased a station in society at too dear a cost; one regret leads to another, until she feels her situation all but unendurable,—the very antipodes of her inexperienced expectation.

She has no one to blame, as she entered voluntarily into such an engagement, (if indeed we can speak of a woman having power to do any action voluntarily, when a stern necessity is on her right hand and on her left, when she has before her indeed only a choice of evils,) she smothers her grief and disappointment; heartlessly, and cheerlessly performing her appointed tasks; getting hardened, if not accustomed to the frowning, grumbling, and never ending hints, that she is always in the wrong. In this manner that existence passes wearily away, which under better circumstances, and a more elevated and enlightened social system, might have been one of happiness to both parties; especially were the relationship and duties of married persons towards each other better understood and more clearly defined.

Nothing, however, seems at present to be known, than the one rule of "Wives *obey* your husbands!" no matter how silly, how absurd—nay, indeed, in many instances, how ruinous the command may be. The duty of the wife *means* the obedience of a Turkish slave, while the husband believes himself empowered to be of a like imperiousness with the follower of the turbaned prophet. It is a curious fact, that we never hear the faintest echo of that equally dis-

tinct command, "Men, love and *honour* your wives!" It seems to be taken for granted, that women have many obligations in this state to perform, from which men are free; but this is far from being the case: the obligations being the same, and equally binding upon both, though from the perverse training to which the sexes are subjected, the whole weight is laid upon those who, from the very falsehood of their education, are the least able to bear it. Woman, chained and fettered, is yet expected to work miracles. Man, however, deems himself free to do as he likes; to spend his money and time as he pleases, and to scold his *patient Griselda*, should she dare to remonstrate about extravagance, waste, indolence, or idleness. *Her* business is to love! suffer!! and obey!!! the three articles of woman's creed. She must on no account reason or suppose herself wiser than her protector and legislator, even should he bring her and her children to beggary. The misery which women often suffer, from the recklessness and speculative folly of their companions, is incalculable; only to be understood by those who have thus become victims to the obstinacy and self-will of those upon whom they depended,—nay, upon whom they were forced to depend—for subsistence.

Let it not be imagined, however, that I am so

blindfolded by partiality to my own sex, as to believe that they, and they alone are the sufferers, though, *generally* speaking, I think they are; (but owing, perhaps, as much to their own ignorance as to other causes.) I admit that many men, willing to be considerate, forbearing, and rational companions, find in those they have unhappily chosen, the veriest pests of their life; whose whims, caprices, childishnesses, and affectations, are beyond endurance; whom, for the sake of peace, they are compelled to treat like grown-up babies, regarding them consequently, and justly, with a contempt which is barely mingled with pity. Shall I confess that it would not grieve me to see such puerile beings treated in every way like children, could it amend them? I would almost recommend the exploded practice of giving them bread and water, and a stand in a dark corner, until they obtained some particles of sense, or could be taught not to torment their husbands, their children, servants, and all connected with them, as they do. And I further regret to say that their numbers are very extensive, more than exceptions to the better rule.

Have we not yet become wise enough to know that fools, no matter of what sex, are invariably the most difficult to manage; yet we daily see men of otherwise sound minds, making choice

of wives with whom it seems impossible for them to converse even for an hour without weariness. And yet they are willing to be tied to the dolls for life! This would be incomprehensible indeed, did we not keep before us the remembrance, that it is the person of a woman which is admired, and not her mind: if the former pleases the eye, and makes an impression upon the senses, her judgment, generally speaking, is never inquired into.

How different would it be, were marriage regarded as something better than a mere comfort on the part of man, and a means of subsistence on the part of woman. When clearer ideas are formed upon this relationship, we shall see no such pitiable sights as are at present for ever presenting themselves in connection with it; no such deterioration of the human race as is now going on; no beings, themselves too weak to drag one limb after the other, producing unhappy sickly creatures, to whom life is scarcely a blessing. Neither should we be shocked with such marriages as those to which mental imbecility ought to prove an insurmountable obstacle.

It is not to be wondered at, that some men, possessed of feeling for those who are to succeed them, choose for the mother of their children some rosy-faced country Hebe, determined that

at least these shoots shall have a vigorous physical organization, whatever their mental development may turn out to be, though we are told that *both depend very much upon the mother*. In such a choice, these persons are so far right; but it would be doubly pleasing to find united in a wife a sound constitution with a healthy and well cultivated understanding, both combining to make her able and willing to enter into all enlightened views of her husband for the perfecting of their children, mentally as well as bodily. I do not even suppose that the young country girl is devoid of mind; she may have great natural endowments, but, unless these have been brought out and improved by education, she cannot be on a level with her companion, or that of his friends. This is often powerfully felt by both parties, more especially should the female really be intelligent, for she must then readily perceive the distance which separates her from those with whom she has thus been brought into contact. Happiness is best secured when the parties are as nearly as possible on an equality in all respects, both with regard to what is called station in society, and powers of mind. Such men as have chosen their wives from an inferior rank to their own are seldom happy, and the person so exalted is also unhappy, a thousand things

ever reminding her unpleasantly of the difference. But the cause of this unhappiness is not more inquired into than the many other causes which render the present mode of contracting alliances such a vicious one; when, in the words of an old author, "Marriage is nothing more than a bare ceremonious union of hands." And a passage or two from this work shall be quoted, since it happens to be a man who thus expresses himself, and not a woman, she being always suspected on this subject to be beset with the prejudices of her sex, or else bewildered with some wild unreal sort of scheme, for the elevation of that part of the human family to which she belongs.

In speaking of marriage, he remarks "That the union of knowledge and talents, with frivolousness and insipidity, cannot be agreeable, and what is not agreeable will not be lasting; the heart can find no durable attraction, where it knows no esteem, and without the secret concurrence of the heart, there can be no enjoyment. This seeming paradise of sweets will roughen as we approach it, into a wilderness of thorns; the senses are soon palled, disgust succeeds to satiety, quarrels to disgust; where the soul has no fresh graces to expand, and there remain no new and unexplored treasures in the understanding."

He then goes on to state the propriety and

necessity of giving to woman a higher education, to fit her for companionship with man ; but we may wearily ask when is the system to begin ? The book, from which the foregoing extract has been taken, was written some fifty years since, and yet matters, with regard to our training, continue much as they were then. Indeed, if we except the intelligence on the subject, which has of late come forth from the pens of several high-minded women, it might be thought that our position was worse than formerly, but, the motto, *nil desperandum*, should be kept in view.

This author observes in another place, “ If the minds of women were placed upon solid objects, by a judicious and early culture, they would become at once the ornament and blessing, as now, there is but too much reason to apprehend, they are only the ‘bane and corrupters of society.’ ” (What say those to this, who so smoothly and pleasingly speak of the great moral influence of women ?)

He again says, “ Their charms would be the prize of valour, merit, and understanding ; their conversation would be a soft and noble spur to every noble action ; and in the intervals which would then be devoted to their company, the soul would be acquiring an elasticity, and a vigour for every great and dignified undertaking.

Little do women know of their own real interests, if they do not think themselves essentially interested in such a revolution; they would then be approached with esteem and veneration; the frothiness of compliment would be exchanged into the language of truth. Their empire over our hearts, then founded on the inimitable qualities of the mind, would be glorious and permanent, not subject to expire in the wrinkles of age, or wither with the transient roses of beauty. Their friendship would be courted, and our morals would be improved in the refinement of our taste; we should disdain to stoop for pleasure to the impure; we should look for real enjoyment with women who had sentiment, and who had understanding; we should desire to converse upon rational subjects, and they would listen with attention. They would not expect that extravagant homage, which steals our time from elevated pursuits; they would incite us to great and noble achievements. Marriage would be inviolate and sacred, not checked by extravagance and disgraced by infidelity, or poisoned by dissipation; unimpaired constitutions would produce a race of hardy and healthy children, who in time might become the defenders of their country, the pillars of a declining state. Women would attain to that golden age which I have been describing, and

men, though not in Paradise, would have delicious pleasures spread round their retirements."

I could not resist giving the whole of this glowing picture, which might tempt men as well as women to become more rational in their intercourse with each other, seeing that so much solid happiness would be the necessary result. But how long are we to write and speak without acting? Are we waiting for an Act of Parliament to determine the precise position which we are to occupy in the social scale before we make a single progressive movement?

The greater number of men are doomed to live by the sweat of their brow, labourers and artisans, and the greater number of women are meant to be wives and mothers; why are not the latter, as well as the former, brought up and instructed in all that relates to the position they are likely to hold? Not taught that the sum total of their existence is to find, by hook or by crook, a husband; but that having met with some one worthy of their affection and friendship, and willing to unite their destiny with his, they ought to be instructed that the relationship into which they are entering, is one of deep and paramount importance. That in it many trying duties have to be performed, many trials expected, much fatigue to be endured, for all of

which, both energy and exertion are indispensably necessary. So that the young girl may have *some* idea of the reality; and not, as is too often done, permitting her to suppose that she is entering upon some fairy garden of Eden, rather than a field, where if flowers are found, there are often by their side noxious weeds and nettles; where, instead of cooling fountains, and soft murmuring streams, there are wild torrents and impetuous floods, threatening destruction to whatever impedes their course, be it flower, or shrub, or stately tree!

How often is it unfeelingly and blindly said, "Oh! poor things, they will soon enough find all that out, there is no use to damp their hopes!" If these hopes were based on a solid foundation, there would be no need to damp them, for no one would causelessly cloud the bright sky of youth; but to permit the young mind to rest in delusion, until rudely and roughly awakened by some ungentle voice, must be considered an unpardonable cruelty, or a fatuous folly. In this world we are scarcely more punished for our actual vice, than for our deplorable ignorance, since we cannot perform a single action, which is in disharmony with some law of nature though unknown to us, without reaping the bitter fruits of our want of knowledge, or of

judgment. We frequently suffer more misery in consequence of an apparently trifling error or misapprehension, than we might have endured under the commission of some acknowledged crime or evil; it thus becomes of the highest moment to be ignorant of nothing, which it is of the least importance for us to know.

The cause of so much unhappiness among married persons does not arise so often from the positive wickedness, or evil dispositions of the parties, as from their want of due consideration of the step they were taking, their ignorance, frivolity, and carelessness. They take a partner for life with as little concern or anxiety as they do one for a waltz or quadrille; of responsibilities they never think; provided they have money enough, according to their rank or idea of style, wherewith to eat, drink, dress, and be merry, they have no thought, no care for aught beyond. When the money melts away, as it often does, taking gay friends and smiling acquaintances along with it, when it becomes a matter of difficulty to find the wherewith to buy viands and dress, then comes the hour of thought and of retribution; and then come, when least needed, angry looks, tearful eyes, harsh words, unavailing complaints and regrets. Poverty, with its horrors, dispels many a fanciful dream; if love

itself can scarcely bear the fire of that furnace, how by any alchemy can worldly-mindedness or selfishness succeed in doing so?

Married women should be strong minded, as well as strong bodied, for they are often called upon to perform herculean tasks, both mentally and physically. It is a deplorable sight to see a fragile creature, weak both in body and mind, the mother of a family, poor and feeble beings like herself, who appear as if every wind would annihilate them, or the rays of the sun scorch them to death; to see her all day reclining listlessly on a couch, scarcely able to bear the sound of a door shutting or opening; her little effigies compelled to steal like mice from one place to another, lest the sound of their tiny feet should unstring her nerves! Further, how painful is it to see a man of diseased and worn-out constitution marrying and becoming the parent who bequeaths to his offspring pain and suffering, indeed not unfrequently an early grave. Such evils are even worse than disunity of mind on the part of the parents, which might with a little trouble be in some degree amended, by forbearance on both sides, and which concerns chiefly the married couple themselves; but who can make the crooked straight, or the radically diseased, healthy? Disease thus transmitted to

others becomes a double misfortune, since we know how materially the state of our corporeal frame affects our mind, and how much our pleasure in life depends upon a sound constitution.

Can we be free from sin, if all these things are neglected in marriage? Are we to be more careful of our horses and other animals, than of our own race? Are we calmly to look on, and see not only matter deteriorated, but mind along with it? for though we cannot yet say with certainty that mind is an inheritance as well as body, still it seems almost as if it were. Are we to stand still, and see marriage pretended to be held in reverence, yet in reality desecrated more and more every day by hypocrisy, love of gain, desire of name or rank; in short, by every offering which can bring the rite into contempt? whilst those sober graces which ought to adorn the shrine are rare as angel visits, so rare indeed that their reality is doubted! just as those who are in the habit of wearing paste diamonds, cannot believe in the genuineness of the gems worn by others.

CHAPTER IX.

IMAGINATION—POETRY—SPIRITUALITY.

A terrible sagacity informs
 The poet's heart, he looks to distant storms;
 He hears the thunder e'er the tempest lowers,
 And, armed with strength surpassing human powers,
 Seizes events as yet unknown to man.
 Hence in a Roman mouth, the graceful name
 Of Prophet and of Poet were the same.—COWPER.

WOMAN is said to have more imagination than man, and more spirituality. I am not certain of this, being somewhat sceptical about the diviner attributes, with which (in words) we are invested; I say, in words, for whenever the matter is to be fairly tested, and our judges put as it were upon their honour or their self-interest, it is wonderful how commonplace, nay, how mean our high-soaring attributes become. That woman has many fancies I grant, it would be desperate had she not, as their absence would betoken want of mind altogether, which mind, from being denied proper studies, must vent itself in some shape or other; should these fancies be then somewhat extravagant, are we to be blamed?

Like all rare and precious gifts, poetry, when real, is the heritage of as few women as men; and I am often amazed, when told of the poetical talents of my sex, to find scarce a faint shadow of that heavenly ray of light which, from a mode of speech in fashion, we are led to suppose must beam celestially in the mind of every woman that we encounter. I am *almost* convinced (it is safest not to be positively certain about anything) that were the minds of young women as early trained as those of young men to dignified, solid, and tough sort of studies, there would be a speedy flight of that which, in the former, is called poetic feeling; while, in the minds of those who were *really* in possession of the ethereal and indestructible fire, which in defiance of all opposing circumstances, burns brightly and purely, in the very midst of the most oppressive atmosphere, an atmosphere sufficient to extinguish all falsely kindled sparks, it would assuredly *never* depart.

Boys are laughed out of all sensibility, while in girls this is unduly nurtured and over-excited; but in the young mind yet unsullied by contact with a selfish world, there is as much sensibility in the one sex as in the other; with this difference, however, that the girl, having inherited from generations past, an enfeebled bodily frame, or

to speak elegantly, a delicately beautiful organization, has not the strength to resist the outward exhibition of her emotions, even should she wish to do so. But she is not to wish any such thing; she is called hard-hearted if she does not weep, or affect to weep, at every piteous tale or scene of misery that comes in her way. Whereas a boy who shed tears immediately loses caste among his rougher, and coarser-minded, companions, who are moreover always the majority, and possess the weight of that majority.

Gentle and refined feelings are not naturally so abundant even among females as many good-hearted persons believe; like the rarer and more lovely plants, they are less common than the every-day flowers which flourish by the roadside. They need to be carefully sought for, and when found, to be gently dealt with, or, like the soft down of the butterfly, we may rudely brush them away, or leave them to expire unheeded and uncherished.

As to the spirituality or heavenly-mindedness of woman, it is very easily accounted for. Those who have been so ungraciously treated in this lower world, would be unwise indeed if they did not comfort themselves with continual thoughts of that better one, where all their sorrows are to have an end, and their griefs to be forgotten.

That place where man dares no longer to oppress the weak or insult the defenceless, must ever be looked forward to with inexpressible joy by those who are the victims of his hypocrisy, malice, hatred, or cruelty, here. But such a feeling is not spirituality, though in general this is all that is understood by the term, when used in connection with our sex. Spirituality is a different frame of mind from that which is induced by a sense of grief or suffering. A desire to be free from unhappiness does not necessarily imply heavenly-mindedness; this is another error frequently committed; persons tired of this world, suppose themselves to be fit denizens of another, as if the mere weariness of present existence were a sufficient passport to heaven.

We are ever told that marriage and the cares of life will soon put our poetry to flight; but how can this be, if poetic sentiment were inherent in the mind of woman, an important portion of her being? Reality speedily dissolves all idle fancies, all unsubstantial theories, and therefore ideas which are only vagrant ones must be abandoned; but nothing can destroy, nothing can annihilate, the genuine spark which descends from heaven's own fire, and flaming upwards seeks ever to unite itself with the element from which it has been dissevered. In whatever mind this sacred torch

is lit, there its light will dwell, until, freed from the surrounding darkness of earth, it ascends pure and bright to its native sphere. Poetry is not to be considered as a love of the ideal, but rather an earnest aspiration towards the real; an intense desire to find the essence that gives beauty to those outward shadows, which we, in contradistinction to ideality, call reality. The poet and the painter are both seeking for the invisible beauty, of which the outward expression is but a faint impress; they are no mere Ixion-like graspers of clouds, however gorgeous may be their hues; but neither can they content themselves with this dim twilight sort of existence; they gasp, as it were, to dwell in the presence of uncreated and eternal light.

But these are the few, for not to many are given the loftiest aspirations of poetry, and we may well be perplexed when we see the satisfaction of the majority with their present scene of action; those who plainly say, that if they had plenty of money, and earthly comforts, they are perfectly willing to remain for ever on earth, and cannot imagine what those people would be at, who are perpetually raving about a higher and more comprehensive scene of action. Where is the ideal or the spiritual to be found in such lumps of materiality?

How many women do we find fit to comprehend the words of a De Stael when she says, "Is there not a fatality suspended over exalted souls? they are the exiles of another region; I know not what involuntary force precipitates genius into misfortune; its possessor hears the music of the spheres, which human organs cannot comprehend; he penetrates the mysteries of sentiment which are unknown to others, and in his soul resides a deity too great to be confined within mortal bounds. On earth this divine emanation hears no responsive echo, and the vulgar regard as a folly, that restlessness of soul, which seems to want breathing-room in this world, while it pants with enthusiasm and hope."

How many can we number whose unhappiness proceeds from what is called Ideality, or an intense longing for something more than earth can give? earth *can* give happiness to the most of persons, were their earthly desires not now and then thwarted. It is only the truly spiritual who feel the aching want, which infinity alone can supply. How beautifully does Felicia Hemans express this sentiment, when she asks, "Is that strong passion for intellectual beauty a happy or a mournful gift, when so out of harmony with our earthly lot? Sometimes I think of it in sadness, but oftener it seems to me a sort of rainbow, made up of light

and tears, yet still the pledge of happiness to come." This was the language of one, who heard indeed the music of the spheres, as Madame de Staël expresses it. In the deeply poetical soul, we almost universally perceive a solemn prophetic sadness; which is the consciousness of the shadowy nature of all which encompasses us, the dimness of that light which men call reason, which thus oppresses it. Who can read the Ode to Genius by Kirke White without becoming somewhat sad himself?

It is maintained by some writers, that woman can attain to higher virtue than man, and likewise that she can become more vicious and debased by crime. Were this indeed established as an incontrovertible truth, her *superiority* must be acknowledged, for a weak inferior creature could by no possibility surpass a stronger being, or one endowed in a superior manner, either in virtue or vice. It were just as wise to argue that the man is somewhat lower than the angels, yet, by some singular anomaly, he may excel them in goodness if not in intelligence. This saying, about woman, strikes me, like many others having the same family resemblance, as being a something, which when attempted to be dissected, vanishes into nothing; one of those many misty speeches, which from their vast dimness, or dim vastness,

appear at first sight imposing enough, but when approached for examination, gradually disappear as shadows do at noon !

Woman is softly named the poetry of earth ; as far as outward appearance is concerned, the appellation may not be altogether amiss, for she is fair and beautiful. But since some go beyond this, and assert that her mind is more poetical than that of her more coarsely-formed companion, are these admirers of her's able or willing to bring up facts to bear out this assertion ? A great deal of nonsense is spoken about woman, which it is much to be wished were put an end to ; it is to be hoped that she would willingly part with high-sounding titles and give up nonentities, for a few substantialities ; nay, it is to be supposed that she would even be content to descend to the same level as her fellow-traveller, man ! Woman would assuredly rather share his labours, than be raised up into the air, to rest upon clouds, through which she is perpetually falling into abysses black as midnight, and from which she is never permitted to rise. It seems to have passed into a sort of truism, that if woman is not an angel, she must be a demon ! a seraph one hour, a fury the next ! If we really do possess some more rarefied essence than man does, it is singular enough that it by no means serves to keep us in our aërial position, as

history has given us not a few proofs that if we can ascend, we can also descend to very fearful depths.

Poetry has been compared to a sixth sense, as it not only heightens and beautifies all it looks upon, but gives a perception of refinement and spirituality seemingly unknown to those who have it not. A writer speaking of poets says, "It is the imaginative man who potentially includes the other, who recognises the greatness of the logical man, and yearns to assimilate himself with his greatness; while the logical man, who is the smaller man, and cannot appreciate the greatness of imagination, repels and scorns him. Is not this every-day experience? The poet appreciates and sympathises with the man of science, although he does not bend his faculties the same way, does not lead the same logical life. The man of science sneers at the poet, because he knows only his own ideas, comprehends only his own purposes; as the greater includes the less, and not the less, the greater, so does the poetic mind include the other."

This exaltation of the poet is somewhat against the general opinion, which gives him only a secondary rank in the intellectual scale, and, I suppose, it is only in accordance with the more prevalent idea, that woman is said to be poetical

by nature. That she *affects* to be so, there is little doubt, just as she affects to be many things, which by nature she is not; endeavouring to become the creature she is represented, she labours incessantly at this, till in all likelihood, she is deceived herself as to her real character. It is not averred that willingly and knowingly she thus practices deception, but that in consequence of being for ever taught and told that she must be this and must be that, or else she is unwomanly and unpleasing, she ends by exerting herself to acquire the semblance, at least, of what she is taught to believe is indispensable! By this training it is easy for her to fancy her acquired sentiments a natural inheritance. But what *good* object can be attained by such a system of delusion; deceptive in the first instance to ourselves, and in the next to others? Though I must add, that I cannot help thinking, in spite of all the fine speeches about the elegance, delicacy and refinement of woman's mind, that no one is so much deceived in the matter as herself!

Were we all born poets, it would be very delightful, but as only a small minority are gifted with this sixth sense, would it not be wiser to content ourselves with the five, making the best use of them we can? If we know not the exquisite joy which thrills through the souls of those

children of light, love, and harmony, we are spared their hours of oppression, which weigh down their spirits to the dust, darkening their mental vision, and making their pulse of life languid. All ought to rise as high as their individual nature allows, but it is one thing to wish for or admire wings, another to possess them; consequently, it is as absurd as useless for those to attempt to fly who have not been provided with those angelic auxiliaries.

Such as have been gifted with a brilliant imagination, should consider themselves happy; if used aright it may brighten many a dark and dreary hour; when wearied of warring with the elements which environ our human existence, they may find in it refreshment and solace; for in an instant, it can place before them such glowing pictures of what is one day to be realized, that they may thereby gain fresh courage to renew their exertions, and fresh hope to pursue the object of their wishes. By the power of imagination we can conjure up an oasis in the loneliest and dreariest wilderness, we can adorn with flowers of the richest perfume the bleak and desolate waste, and, when exhausted with the converse of man, we can soar to heaven, and inhale the vivifying air, which enables us to continue without fainting our weary way through

this world. Through it we may enjoy the intimate society of the great and good of every age, we can have angels, as it were, for our companions, and by fixing our attention upon the pure and the true, we may in an extraordinary manner elevate and enrich ourselves; for by this power we have access to treasures unthought of and undreamt of, by the more lowly and unambitious sons of earth. Imagination is a glorious gift bestowed on man, by which he may have faint ideas of that happiness reserved for his enjoyment in another sphere. Yet this, like all things good which we inherit, may, by our perversion and folly, be converted into evil, instead of that for which it was intended; we may conceive that we should live in imagination alone, that the best way to pass through life is in dreaming of heaven. 'This is an error; our imagination ought rather to give us new incentives to action; if we rest in the mere idea, without seeking to embody it, we are wrong, and frustrate the design of our present life, which demands the exercise of the whole of our powers. Further, there is no necessary affinity or relationship between imagination and melancholy, as some are led to suppose, neither is sadness the characteristic peculiarly of poetry. Though it is true, that there is mixed up much sorrowful expression

in the works of some poets, yet, it was not the poetical feeling which produced this sadness, but rather the disharmony which poetry meets with in all and everything around it, seeking realities while finding only shadows, and panting for light in the midst of darkness; therefore, we need not wonder that a mournful chord should at times be struck.

We ought to be careful not to mistake one thing for another, but as far as possible, give to each its appropriate name. Poetry has suffered much from being, as it often is, associated with the appellations and realities of melancholy and gloom. When poets give way to lamentations, they descend from their throne, and are become forgetful of their high avocation, for theirs is peculiarly the beneficent task to scatter the brightness of heaven over the dimness of earth, and to pour from their golden urns, celestial dew. They are meant as "ministering angels" to the care-worn sons of toil; not to speak words of sadness, but to sing glad songs of joy; to cheer the sorrowful, to strengthen the weak, and to animate and arouse the sluggish.

A certain species of poetical composition is anything but poetical, such as the melancholy incantations of YOUNG's *Night Thoughts*, and others in the same lugubrious strain. When

reading such, a gloomy sensation is apt to creep over us, as if we were treading over newly covered graves, or exploring some damp and unwholesome depository of the dead. In genuine poetry there must be sunshine and smiles, for in the home of the real child of light, there is neither darkness or tears; in the soul of a poet, we should have the representation of faith, hope, and charity, that fine *imagination* which figures or presents to us the invisible yet true; the *expectation* of one day possessing what we now mentally behold, and that *love* which radiates and lights up the world. To suppose poetry akin to sorrow is doing it an injustice; the mind in a healthy state must have an instinctive antipathy to gloom and melancholy, for we were created for happiness and gladness, not for misery and weeping; though, as we are at present placed in a world where all is confused, discordant, and more or less tinged with evil, we cannot always have that calmness and serenity, which is to be so much desired.

It is not upon earth that the soul can find its haven of rest; before that is reached, we must traverse its unquiet seas, and we need no artificially created sadness to add to the discomfort of our journey. Our duty is to pursue our way as cheerily as possible, not to retard our progress by

vain and useless complaints; these only weaken us for exertion, while too much thinking about yesterday unfits us for the business of to-day.

Thus all sentimental effusions, which pass under the much abused name of poetry, are to be eschewed. It has been already observed that the feelings of women are far too much and too constantly excited, and kept on the stretch; these feelings are for ever called upon, for ever appealed to; can there be, then, any wonder that at times they should become unmanageable and excessive?

Let such as have imagination employ it aright, not in diving into every dark abyss, in search of the awful and the fearful, dressing up the hideous, in what they suppose to be poetical drapery, startling the beholder by grotesqueness, or disgusting him by the ghastly skeleton, which peers from beneath the scanty veil. Let imagination use her wings, and fly upwards in the clear bright sky; there in the light of day she will see only what is pure, what is lovely, and what is beautiful. She will return to earth, fairer than when she left, and the snow-white wings which have wafted her towards the centre of truth will have received fresh power to renew the adventurous flight.

In whatever eccentric orbit the imagination

of woman may have wandered, however fantastically excursive may have been her flights or freaks, her fits of fancy, she stands charged with no such desecration of the lyre, as does her fellow-man! It is too true what a poet said, who himself never sang one false, or earth-tuned note, whose lays were those of truth and freedom, and from whom I have so frequently quoted—Cowper.

In Eden, ere yet innocence of heart
Had faded, poetry was not an art,
Till luxury seduced the mind,
To joys less innocent, as less refined ;
Then Genius danced a Bacchanal, he crowned
The brimming goblet, seized the thyrsus, bound
His brows with ivy, rushed into the field,
Of wild imagination and there reeled
The victim of his own unhallowed fires,
And dizzy with delight profaned the sacred wires ;
Anacreon, Horace, played in Greece and Rome
This Bedlam part, *and others nearer home.*

We have at least this satisfaction, that though there have been as yet no female Homer or Shakspeare, no such reproaches as are conveyed by the foregoing lines can be cast upon any of the British daughters of song.

CHAPTER X.

RELIGION.

I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.—ST. PAUL.

. Philosophy baptized,
 In the pure fountain of eternal love
 Has eyes indeed.
 One Spirit, His
 Who wore the platted thorns with bleeding brow,
 Rules universal nature.
 Happy who walks with Him!—COWPER.

ALL are agreed that the feeling of religion is inherent in the human race; that it is a sense of something greater than ourselves, to which we must render homage; an invisibility beyond the reach of our senses, yet as surely believed in, as the visible and material which is seen and known. This feeling has manifested itself under various forms, all springing from the same deep source; man, by a necessity of his nature, seeks an altar and a God. Blessed are they to whom the ever-sought has been disclosed, upon whose souls is impressed the divine testimony of revelation, and who worship in spirit and in truth. The still seeking, whose temples dedicated to an unknown

Deity proclaim their wanderings in the misty regions of doubt, are objects who claim compassion and attention; for man cannot love what is unknown, neither can he worship the varying phantom of his own creation.

In the midst of a dreamy and transient existence, we seek a reality upon which we may firmly take our stand, a something upon which the soul may repose in security, while the waves of change are lashing around. That which is formed to delight in truth cannot rest satisfied in perplexity or conjecture; and this is why many, no longer able to endure the mental torture of suspense or uncertainty, seize hold of certain opinions, determined that *these* shall be to them as truth. They surround them with reasons often sophistical enough, but which they call conclusive, and exclaim with joy, that they have found a system where all difficulties are solved, where reason has overcome all obstacles, penetrated every mystery, dissolved every cloud, and now sits enthroned as the mighty magician to whom Nature has unveiled her most profound secrets; from whom nothing is hidden, to whom nothing is unknown; hence in the philosophy of these would-be master spirits, "nothing is undreamt of." The present age seems to be in an unusual degree infected with the mania of system-making; every thinker

struggling to find, what will for ever silence doubt, and prove a panacea for existing evils, whether moral, political, or social. There is one happy feature in this unrest, it shows that men are conscious there is much which is radically wrong, that they feel the want of a something defined and assured, and thus the search for truth is pursued, and followed with avidity.

But religion is no system, no artificial explanation of causes and effects, of disease and remedy; no given number of axioms and rules by which men are to be as it were mechanically governed. It is none of these, but a vital energy which ought to animate and vivify every action; a divine spark, which, enkindled, ought to warm our affections, enlighten our minds, and radiate our path through life. It is a temper or feeling meant to pervade our whole being, neither a pursuit or science, as some seem to imagine, converting it into a mere subject whereon to exercise the understanding, and power of reasoning, rather than regarding it as the living fire, which is to purify the earthly dross, and to prepare the soul for living in its proper element. It is no pleasing sight to look upon a mummy; we gladly exchange it for the expression of life, yet worse than a mummy is the lifeless, heartless, statue-like Christianity which we often meet. A religion shrouded in mystic

garments, and confined in cold stillness, is not that for which the human soul was formed; in such inanimation there is nothing responsive to that voice, which asks a living thing, and which instinctively turns away from gloom and deadness. Can anything (however beautiful in aspect) without vitality be deemed a fit representation of the source of universal life? Or can any homage be seemly or meet for the Great Creator, which springs not from the most exalted faculties of the soul, that precious and divine gift the heaven-born part of man? Living and immortal truth can alone satisfy our desires, mind only can hold communion with mind, even that of the creature with the Creator. And though the immortal Mind, the inspirer and giver of all finite intelligence and feeling, is removed from us by the distance which the finite bears to the infinite; yet we must believe that there exists a link which binds the created to the uncreated; which enables the former to hold converse with the All Ruling and All Comprehending Spirit,—a converse, though mysterious, yet as real as the fact that the unseen and the unheard exist.

The chief reason why religion is less active, less energetic than it ought to be, is in consequence of our separating, as it were, time from eternity, making of them two distinct things or

ideas; whereas we ought to be aware that we are even *now* in that eternity of which time signifies to us only the point from which we have begun our journey; and death, the first stage at which we change our mode of conveyance, but not ourselves; we leave behind only a worn-out vehicle, not fitted for the next part of the way, but we ourselves go on. Our equipment in all respects must be fitted for those purer regions, where what was passable enough, perhaps, in the eyes of man, may appear utterly contemptible in the presence of those who are to be our future companions.

The idea prevalent among many that some extraordinary change passes over our spirit at death, is a delusive one; and tempts us to delay the acquirement of what cannot be too soon, or too eagerly sought for; the acquirement of those dispositions and feelings which are requisite for our higher state of existence; those which are to endure, not like our outward frame for a limited time, but which being indestructible, will continue for ever. I would seek to impress the danger of such a belief, through the words of a celebrated author of the present day, a belief founded, it is to be feared, too often upon a want of *the will* to part with some of our earthly propensities.

“An instantaneous change, either from good

to evil or evil to good, if effected in a sovereign manner by a foreign power, and effected irrespectively of an economy of motives, would rather be the annihilation of one being and the creation of another, than the changing of the character of the same being: for it is of the very nature of a change of character, that there be an internal process, a concurrence of the will, and a yielding of the rational faculties to rational inducements, and also the giving way of one species of desires, and of one class of habits, to another.

“That the sovereign benevolence may indeed, if it pleases, so touch the springs of our motives, as to bring about effectively a change of character, is to be by no means denied; and indeed such an act of grace lies at the foundation of that economy of mercy under which we are now placed; but then this exertion of spiritual influence always flows in the channel of moral means and inducements; nor are we entitled to look for it under any other conditions than those explicitly laid down, and solemnly insisted upon, by the inspired writers, who strictly confine our expectations of efficacious grace to the present economy, and who, in the tones of awful warning, announce *this* to be the day of salvation, and this the accepted season of mercy*.”

* TAYLOR'S *Physical Theory of another Life*.

There surely cannot be a more delusive error, than as it were to place a barrier between time and eternity, to live here in the pursuit of what is perishable, and yet to suppose that when we shut our eyes upon earth, we shall instantly afterwards open them in heaven, prepared to delight in those higher duties of the soul and its affections, upon which till then we had scarcely bestowed a passing thought.

It is said that woman by nature is more prone to be religious than man, having a gentler and more loving heart; this is, however, by no means certain, since the qualifications of the two sexes in this respect appear to be much alike. Though, as in other cases alluded to already, in consequence of the different training beginning with the very dawn of consciousness, woman is taught, if not by example, yet certainly by precept, that religion, or the semblance of religion, must form a part of her character. Thus, while the religion of man is often accidental, (if I may use the expression,) a woman without religious sentiment is considered abhorrent, a contradiction of nature, whereas an irreligious man is regarded with no such feeling.

The consequence of such fallacies, here as in other matters, holding up such a marked difference between the morals and religious feelings of

the two sexes, lead to very melancholy results, and to much self-deception; making women run the risk of mistaking shadow for substance, the semblance for the thing itself. It is an easy matter to repeat what from childhood we have incessantly heard, to imagine the *appearance* of the possession of what are foolishly called *passive virtues*, constituting religion. The *real* possession of such virtues indeed elevates the owner to the rank of a Christian, as well as to that of a conqueror, for in order to acquire these mis-named passive virtues, the utmost force of the will is often required, and all of us must know that there are times, when to be still, requires infinitely more decision and strength of character, than the most impetuous display of action. When the passions sleep, we may speak of being passive; but when roused, and ready, torrent-like, to overleap every obstacle, prepared to dash onwards in storm, is it a weak or *passive* will which can resist the rush? Let those answer who have mastered the fierce elements waging war within the human heart.

Woman through her position is in especial danger of being deceived, as she is ever taught to "assume these virtues, if she has them not;" no matter how rampant her feelings may be within, she must maintain an exterior of gentle-

ness and mildness. Whatever is "lovely and of good report," woman is expected to possess, and most rightly should she endeavour to obtain such precious possessions, in common with all beings whose eternity is not on earth. But let us have reality, or nothing; affectation is dangerous in such matters, for becoming contented with the appearance, we may forget that we have not yet obtained the things themselves, and until we obtain the essence ourselves, we cannot hope to impart to others what we have not to give. Religion ought to be embodied in thought, word, and deed, speaking without a voice, seen in brightness and beauty; and it must be so, or it can neither be loved or followed; above all, it should be felt as that emanation which comes from the Deity, and which must with us ascend again to him.

It is a strange perversion of the words of our great Teacher, who spoke not as man but as God, to represent the virtues and Christian graces as of two kinds; a different one for each sex. Such a ruinous error makes man vicious, and I fear in some cases woman deceitful. While we are told to be gentle, modest, chaste, humble, kind-hearted and forgiving, is it anywhere said by our Lord that man is not likewise thus to adorn himself? Has *he* obtained a permission or dis-

pensation to be rude, licentious, immodest, and insolent, or harsh and relentless in his feelings? Certainly not. Yet he acts as if he had. Can woman not remedy this great, this increasing evil, a belief undermining the morals of thousands? Courage is a virtue, and moral courage greater by far than animal courage. Women ought, then, courageously to endeavour to stem the tide of such irreligion, not by an appearance of *passive virtue*, but by the active principle itself, combating against vice in every shape and form, under every disguise, however specious; admitting of no compromise with that conventional usage which serves only as a covering for sin. For this purpose she must neither rest in empty forms or sectarian prejudices, both of which narrow and contract the mind, preventing that charity which is the breath of Christianity.

Religion should not be an isolated thing, standing apart either in our mind or our heart. It must be closely blent with our entire consciousness; must be to us what the sun is to the earth, a powerful light, cheering and irradiating, giving colour and beauty to the lowliest flower as well as strength and majesty to the stateliest tree. Without it, we cannot see nature aright, we cannot read what the Deity has written on the universe; without it, the mightiest symbols

convey no meaning to us, our eyes see not, and our ears are deaf to that mysterious harmony, that mystic music, which sounds the praise of God throughout creation. Blind and deaf to what is without us, we are still more so to inward and spiritual things; we hear no voice speaking to our soul, perceive no light directing us upwards. But the voice is there, though we listen not to it, and the lamp is there, though hidden by the thick veil of matter, and the mist of earthly desire.

If we would think more of our ultimate destination, we could not be so limited in our vision as we are; a single soul is greater than the whole material universe, therefore we should assert its supremacy, and not be willing that it should remain in its ignoble prison-house of mortality. They are pitiful slaves who forge their own fetters, and enchain themselves with their own will. We should not imitate such beings, but, as captives in a strange land, we should consider how we may obtain the joys of freedom and best regain our home. He who said, "I send you as sheep among wolves," commanded us to unite the "wisdom of the serpent with the innocence of the dove." This injunction is too little heeded, as some ignorantly suppose that to be wise is not of equal importance with other acquirements.

This is an error which is the cause of much evil, for religion always suffers when its disciples dissect it into fragments, giving to the separated portions that place which the perfect whole alone can fill; by this dismemberment the beautiful edifice which was intended to be erected becomes deformed and inharmonious.

It ought, then, to be impressed upon woman that she should endeavour to attain that perfection after which *all* are commanded to strive; carefully abstaining from idle disputations and argumentative theology, which so often prove destructive to the divine plant of charity and brotherly love. The question ought not to be, what is the best outward form of worship, but how that inward and spiritual grace may be best attained, of which the visible sign is the earthly and material symbol. Though myself a member of the time-honoured Anglican Church, and deeply imbued with a sense of the purity and beauty of its ritual, I would that all worshipped God in spirit and in truth, according to whatever mode they deemed best fitted to offer up to the Most High that adoration and holy thanksgiving, which from all is due to the Author of every good and perfect gift.

CONCLUSION.

It may be finally observed, that though woman has been lowered in the social scale, she has never truly felt that she was destined to be so by her Creator, consequently in the earliest ages, and in all countries, some of the sex have constantly asserted this truth. Details, however, upon this part of the subject are inconsistent with the size of this work; but the omission is of the less importance, since it has been so far supplied already by abler pens than mine. The progress of woman cannot be denied to be precisely in the same ratio as that of man, both from an original state of barbarism, and again just in the proportion to the elevation of woman does the other half of mankind derive advantage from her existence. It will in all probability be long before her claims are fully conceded, and centuries must perhaps elapse before she is fit to take advantage of the boon when it shall be granted to her; but both are as certain to take place as the advancement of man, and that of the world along with him, of which woman

and her concerns form not a fraction but a half, equally important with the other.

In the meantime if she has aid in her endeavours to advance, so much the better; if not, let her strive to advance without it, or against it, as the case may be. Let the experienced guide the inexperienced; let reason predominate in place of feeling, so that woman may no longer be considered a mere instinctive, but likewise a rational being. We may ask, what is gained by the extreme distinction of sex? No more than this, that one is considered the superior of an inferior, much in the same way that an adult is eminent over a child. But could such a comparison really be made in regard to male and female, consistent with truth, what is there to boast of on the part of the stronger? We care not for maintaining our superiority over the animal creation; we weigh not our qualifications in the scale with those of babies, or with the insane. Dare we say, then, that man doubts at least that woman is less than his equal, and that hence arises the anxiety lest the ignoble should attain that elevation for which they were not intended?

Taxed with the want of benevolence and patriotism; set aside with the epithet of trifler; branded with the name of fool; all and every such degrading appellation, let woman, then, cast

off, and point with pride to the page of history to refute the charge. In that page may be seen enrolled the names of female warriors, stateswomen, patriots, philanthropists, martyrs, and the learned. With all her disadvantages, against all with which she had to contend, the power, nay, sometimes the envy of the other sex, the monument was still reared, whereon are inscribed names that shall never die, waiting for others to be placed beside them.

The frequent reverting to the past, by those who in the present day have made the condition of woman their study, has not unoften been objected to. But in an age like this, so essentially matter of fact, no one is permitted to make a statement without a proof being instantly demanded, as a verification of its correctness. Thus when it is endeavoured to be shewn what the sex *may* become, there seems no method left but to gather up as many facts as may be had, to prove what, under various disadvantages, it had been; from thence inferring, that were woman placed in more favourable circumstances, what were then the exceptions might become the rule. This is doubtless the reason why the historic page has been so anxiously consulted, so unweariedly turned over, by almost all writers who have taken up the subject.

It is gratefully owned that woman is indebted to the best and most enlightened men for such amendment as her condition has yet met with. From others she has nothing to hope, though from the former she may still hope much; for, exactly correspondent to their wisdom and worth is the desire of such men to demolish whatever is wrong; they are aware that knowledge is not the tree of evil for woman any more than for man.

But to turn to the other side of the question, to woman herself, to her backslidings and her faults, as well as her injuries and her drawbacks; can we allege that men alone are in error on these points, and that women, though they do something to correct themselves and others, may not yet do more? Their ignorance is perhaps the first error they should take heed to amend, and then their dependance for a livelihood apart from the other sex. Because, unless they know right from wrong, truth from error, and that the means of subsistence are within the compass of their own exertions, slow indeed must be their progress, dishearteningly so. In a country boasting of civilization, ignorance is disgraceful, even in the poorest peasant, and yet we find it taking up its abode, though perhaps in a different sort, with the wealthiest and most aristocratic females in the land. Indolence is another disgrace, (called

one of the privileges of woman!) the Creator having intended both sexes to work, either with head or hands, as utility required or capability allowed. Much of the weakness of women is owing to the want of work,—to the want of common exercise; inaction palsies their limbs, shrivels their muscles, tortures their nerves,—and thus renders them fair, it is said, to look upon. But can deformity and languor ever be fair? Their minds are weak; and how can they be otherwise? want of healthy activity will make every mind so, and how few women are there in possession of such plebeian riches. What is never used, becomes in time useless. The blacksmith's brawny arm is strengthened to excess at the expense of other members of his body; the pale student tasks his mind till it cracks beneath the strain; and woman is tempered to be soft and fragile till she becomes feeble and helpless.

Some tell us that if they cannot tolerate what are called women of talent, they can at least tolerate *women of sense*; it is difficult, however, to believe this, since we find social intercourse between the sexes on so very low a footing. Both unquestionably are to blame for this, therefore women ought to strive to discern the difference between the surface of society and its depths. As yet they seem acquainted with the

depths of nothing, but suffering on the one hand and idle pleasure on the other. Money in its omnipotence is likewise omnipotent over her, and yet she often sacrifices it, but how, and for whom? In her ignorance she as often lavishes it upon wrong objects as right ones, while the use thus made of it defeats the very end she had in view in its bestowal. And, as if her own ignorance was not enough, the spirit of the laws under which she lives and the customs of that society amidst which she moves, lead where they do not compel her to part with it to those who have no better claim thereto than their tenure of masculine superiority. Women cannot starve, they are not allowed to work; if they have money, it is cozened from them. Is it strange that they should covet what is so necessary, what they can attain by no means but that of marriage?

Poverty and dependance go together, and woman along with them; but woman is styled the guardian of morality, therefore her influence; if she has no other power, ought to effect a change in such cases as where she is least dependant; she can there shew a superior morality, by paying no countenance to gold, where it clothes folly or worthlessness.

Detraction of their own sex is said to be

peculiar, as well as common, to females; likewise a want of all interest in each other's affairs, except that arising from idle curiosity. Much of this may be accounted for in the little regard one inferior ever pays to another while he worships the superior, and further by the rivalry imposed for the favours of that superior.

We are told that however moral, devout, or affectionate a woman may be, yet she can never be great, not great even in those attributes which are obliquely allowed to be her's. Yet greatness and strength of mind being demanded of her in the shape of self-denial, were the circumstances in which she exercises this worthy of such sacrifice, it is certain that she would therein truly claim the title of great. But reared in a sort of fool's paradise, from which the harsh realities of life are the first thing to withdraw her, she is never allowed to unfold what of nobleness there may be in her, but is literally nailed down to those peurile pursuits for which she is afterwards taunted and scorned. The world agrees that the virtues of Christianity are to be admired before all others; it does this in words, but its majority in reality delight in those virtues which are exhibited in a display of physical force. Consequently, women in Christian countries suffer nearly as much through their want of this, as do

the females among savages. Further we know that much which is of the greatest worth is hidden either through the modesty or timidity of its possessor, or the carelessness or ignorance of mankind as to what does not glaringly obtrude itself upon them. Women, consequently, get no thanks for what is hidden in them by their position, and no sympathy for what that very position prevents them from giving to light.

They are said to give the tone to manners and morality, if to nothing else. When influence in so many other respects is denied them, it is not easy, however, to comprehend the truth of this.

Woman can scarcely be blind to the rude distinction which is made in the conversation between men among themselves, and among men when in their society; to the absence of all, where women are present, that is either dignified or solid. If they are, in general, too ignorant to relish intelligence, let them hasten to acquire knowledge, that the other sex may have listeners at least, if not speakers. Those women who are so vain as to require personal compliment at every moment, should examine how far this style is sincere, or whether it ever is so; when the disgust they must feel at finding the reverse will, in time, have the effect of checking such weakness and folly. Let them reflect that the smile

before their faces, is often the sneer behind their backs; that the gaze of affected admiration is frequently no more than the precursor of the wink of derision; the affected humility only the type of haughty condescension; and the imposed semblance of morality too often the cloak of fatigued restraint. Her temporary gratification may vanish, her pleasure may fail, her pre-eminence be cast down, and her virtue may be shocked; but let them be so, since no one can derive advantage from hypocrisy. Let her feelings be stormed, let them contend with her convictions, she will afterwards be the better for knowing truth, that truth which will ultimately shew her that though mankind is related to each other, yet each individual is the master of his own being; that the first duty of woman as well as man is to herself, and not to others; the Creator has linked us all to each other, just as he has linked us to creation and to himself, but all have separate existences apart from each other; therefore, no human being can be the mere property of another.

A few women, conquering the almost insurmountable obstacles which opposed themselves to their progress in learning, have in past ages shewn how very nearly they could approach the other sex even in genius. Some persons deny

that there ever was a woman of genius, but if so, it is amazing how strange a likeness has appeared in her, occasionally, to that endowment. If there has neither been a female Homer, Shakspeare, or Bacon, we may wonder that the male sex in its countless multitudes, on the other hand, has produced only three such luminaries. Some of the greatest French philosophers have asserted that women were equal to men except in the instances of invention and discovery; when we consider what is necessary for the one or the other, few will be inclined to consider these the highest endowments of man. But, it is certain that this dispute can never be settled until women are allowed fair play, until they are permitted to share the advantages of men, and until generations, perhaps, shall have passed in a course of life different to what their's has hitherto been; a life of reason in place of animalism; in the strengthening of their bodies, as well as their minds; a career of mental and bodily activity, in place of one of sloth and ignorance. It is not denied, even now, that since the reign of physical force has been to a considerable extent superseded by that of mental power, that she has come nearer man; but though the partial demolition of mere brute strength has happily been effected, her rights have not been equally granted, conse-

quently she has been able to progress in the reign of mind only in an unequal proportion.

To these, as well as other causes, much of the light reading of the women of the present day is attributable, as well as their light writing, and, owing to these too, it must be granted that women often show a crampness of understanding, at variance with true elevation or freedom of mind. And as literature is one of the modes most unshackled by prejudice, through which she may make her cause known, it would be well if a few of the readers and writers of the sex were to take an example from those of some fifty or hundred years back; from women, who, enlightened through strenuous mental efforts and much learning, were not quite so ready to look upon man as so very much their superior, as some are now; or if not to *believe him really such, at least to pretend so*: thus content, as it were, to be called by one name, and treated in reality as something the reverse. For it is certain, however women may delude themselves through ignorance, indolence, or vanity, that no man can respect or esteem any one who is not in some degree his equal; if, therefore, woman can render him nothing beyond a temporary pleasure, can minister only to his homeliest wants, he must admire her merely as a plaything, or thank

her chiefly as the purveyor of his fireside comforts. But these feelings on his part, exactly comprehend inferiority in his opinion, and all her thwarted attempts to be more than this, to share in his higher pursuits, to be a partner in his more elevated thoughts, his graver studies, the jealousy with which, when married, her male children are removed from her influence when beyond childhood, are enough to show her the sense in which she is generally speaking regarded.

That there has been an advance in female education of late, must be confessed, and though accomplishments are secondary to the training of the intellect, though it is of more consequence to cultivate the head than the heels or the fingers, yet I would not quarrel with my countrywomen on the score of foreign dance or song, provided they are kept secondary to other acquirements. Since our population has become so vast, our competition so enormous, our difficulty of finding the means of livelihood so great, and every day becoming greater, we have at length begun to ask whether it is always convenient to keep women idle.

The unmarried, of course, are the first to be declared fit to shift for themselves; but it has been suggested besides, that women cannot be

nursing all their lives, and that household matters leave them too much time to get into evil habits through pure vacuity.

A fact to which little or no attention has yet been paid, has lately been ascertained, namely, that of the known sources of disease among females, an enormously large proportion originate in causes which may be termed moral in place of physical. While a hundred men are attacked by maladies brought on by disordered bodily organs, through straining, accident, hereditary transmission, or their own excesses, fifty out of a hundred women are stretched in sickness caused by disordered mental feeling, while only one man in fifty is laid low from the same cause. This, of itself, shows that in the condition of women there must be a radical error pervading the system. Why need we talk so much of woman's weakness of body, since we see that it is not this which makes her an invalid, but that she is attacked through her mind, operated upon by circumstances over which she has no control, in consequence of that mind being unfitted to contend with what is so unnaturally laid upon it. Either way is wrong, and should be diligently inquired into, in order to be amended.

Women live longer than men, and live conse-

quently when their age prevents them from pleasing the eye of others ; for what has this longevity been granted them ? Doubtless to make up to them for the time they, by their organization, have been appointed to spend upon others. It will be said that this is a grant of dotage for youth ; but it is not so, for we find that women retain their faculties as well as their years longer than men.

Woman is said to be the very incarnation of love, enough not only to warm others but to consume them as well as herself. True it is that the "Will o' the wisp" blazes away with the impassioned of both sexes ; short-lived in general according to its excess, injurious often to both object and subject. But in the majority of minds the feeling, were it only left to itself, would be as little apparent in the one sex as the other. If women had some other ideas in their heads *besides* those of marriage, they would be less troubled with the soft sentiment ; the truth is, that they are made to believe that love turns the evils of life into blessings, (for them at least,) and that therefore, whatever of hard drudgery or domination they are made to endure, this love is a panacea for all ; under it, delusions are sweet, every thing is rendered delightful, misery is happiness, in short, they are told that love can make

black white. It is a miracle-working power, but there is another which is a sort of rival, two suns shining in one sphere, one scarce less scorching than the other, and that is gold! And here the question must be asked, whether does the certainty of a maintenance, or the certainty of an affection, lead most women now-a-days into marriage?

It is said that woman cannot exist without love; that she is perpetually in search of something whereupon to lavish her affection, something to look up to, something for which to sacrifice herself, something to guide and lead and keep her out of the way of temptation! But is she not at the same time in search of something to support her? to give her food, and clothes, and fire? It is difficult to sound the depths of the heart, and women often deceive themselves as well as others upon this subject. But were the one sex allowed to maintain themselves as the other does, were they equally invested with property, equally educated, equally free from ridicule if unmarried, equally protected by law and public opinion, we should then see less of husband-hunting than we do now, and we should be less disgusted with the affectation of sensibility to impressions.

Love is unquestionably a law of the Creator,

would be a nobler occupation than to pamper lap-dogs or feed canaries.

The extravagant fancies of women are always declared to be the results of their great imagination; they ought therefore to be advised to shun all frivolous and romantic ideas as they would vice itself, since these are often conductors to it, and even when not so, are so very repugnant to wisdom and dignity that they are equally pernicious and offensive. As to the overflowing fancy and great spirituality attributed to women, their weaker organization may certainly make them show their feeling more than man, but in reality gentle feeling is much rarer in woman than is generally owned. If she thinks of Heaven because she is unhappy upon earth, supposing her mere weariness of existence here to be a sure passport elsewhere, the idea does not involve that of spirituality,—if it did, we should not so often see it put to flight by the reality of every-day affairs. Such persons, whether male or female, are but too apt to be contented with the unreality of this life, in place of the reality of a more spiritual one, or, I should rather say, are more than enough contented with this first sphere of being, and through such satisfaction are somewhat unprepared to enjoy that other sphere upon which they must shortly enter; feel-

ing more inclined to look upon it as strange and mysterious, than to welcome or desire it.

I would then earnestly beg of my sex to consider the importance of this subject, and how each in her own way may advance the interests of the whole race by progressing herself. I would have them to reflect that the male and female of the human family are of equal importance in creation, that the incapacity of woman can be proved only after she shall have had equal privileges with man for developement, and that it is more incumbent upon woman to assert her rights to these privileges than to any other duty which may not in strictness be reckoned as of peculiar interest to herself; keeping in view that it is precisely according to her real value in herself, that she can ever be of any value to others.

THE END.

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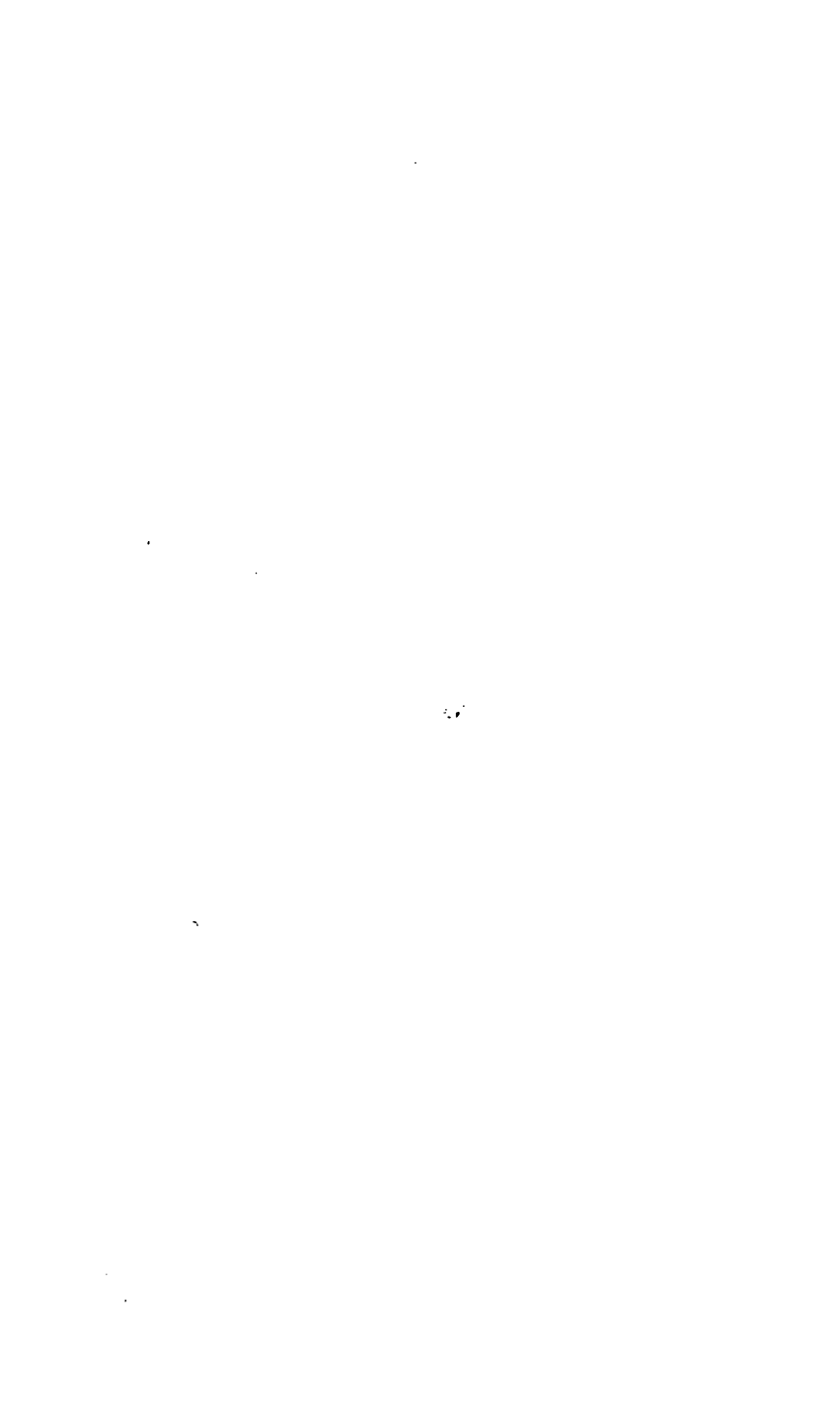
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